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(eds.)

ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON WRITING



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ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON WRITING

Eds.
Nalova Lyonga
Eckhard Breitinger, Bole Butake

Welcome Address

by Claudia Volkmar Clark, Director, Goethe Institut, Yaounde

Your Excellencies,
Dear Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Within the next three to four days the main activity of the Goethe Institut and in the Goethe Institut will be the **Workshop on Anglophone Writing in Cameroon** - the first of its kind.

I am very pleased to host this important event at my Institut and I would like to welcome all of you to the workshop today.

I would like to thank the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany for the support they have given to this event.

This workshop brings together personalities in the field of **Anglophone Literature** from all over Cameroon and from abroad: writers, essayists, university professors, researchers, journalists, students of literature and people generally interested in culture.

There is also a strong German link, which should be mentioned. Dr. Eckhard Breitingger from the University of Bayreuth has been closely connected to it and has watched the development of Anglophone literature in Cameroon with great interest in recent years. His own research focuses on African Anglophone literature and together with Nalova Lyonga and Bole Butake he is preparing a publication on it. I am very pleased to welcome Dr. Breitingger among us.

There are four intensive days ahead of us. There will be four panels of speakers on various aspects of Anglophone writing, two round table conferences, an exhibition of books and an evening of theatre. All of this for the purpose of defining Anglophone Cameroon writing and to explore its relevance to contemporary history. A task of great importance to the development of Cameroon.

The Goethe Institut lends its full support to the success of this initiative. I hope you feel at home in our cultural centre.

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

In one of the most authoritative publications on African Literature in European languages by Albert Gerard (1981), Anglophone Cameroon Literature figures under the title "Prolegomena to ..." and is placed as an appendix to Nigerian literature. It is not even accorded a chapter in its own right. Ten years later, 1991, Richard Bjornson summarised the state of critical attention given to Anglophone Cameroon writing as zero: "On an international level, scholars and critics tended to regard Cameroon writing primarily within the context of francophone African literature". (303)

Bjornson certainly did not want to imply that Anglophone Cameroon Literature did not exist, but his statement is correct in the sense that Anglophone Cameroon Literature has been unduly ignored and disregarded by scholars, critics, fellow writers outside the triangle.

By throwing Anglophone Cameroon Literature into the huge Nigerian bay when looking at it from an international perspective, and by overlooking it completely when approaching Cameroon Literature from the national literature perspective, both views are revealing: they reflect the two major issues against which Anglophone Cameroon writers react with increasing militancy; they reflect also the rather timid stand Anglophone Cameroon writers assumed in 1977 when they were worried about "the paucity of Anglophone writing" and adopted a self-definition and an attitude of no-seers. But, certainly, all these opinions do not reflect the present-day situation of Anglophone writing correctly: both the volume and the important role of Anglophone Cameroon writing in the "Anglophone movements" to redefine the socio-cultural political status within the national and the international arena demand urgently that the status of Anglophone Cameroon writing be reconsidered. This is why and how the idea to organise the workshop was born, the first gathering of writers, critics, scholars concerned with or involved in Anglophone Cameroon writing. The major aim of the workshop was, therefore, to put the record straight. The workshop had to take stock of the corpus and volume of Anglophone Cameroon writing, assess its standing, evaluate and redefine its status and its functions in the present situation. This meant that participants analyse Anglophone Cameroon writing in relation to, or in contrast with, Francophone writing in Cameroon and other Anglophone writing in Africa and throughout the world. The workshop was also to serve as a first step toward creating viable structures to enhance the production, the promulgation and criticism of Anglophone Cameroon writing. It was an endeavour to broaden the critical discourse on Cameroon Literature, to widen the

perspective of the concept of national identity and national literature, to overcome "tribalistic" narrow-mindedness and ethno-centricity.

The workshop revealed areas of richness and confidence (e.g. drama and oral literature) and also areas of austerity and depression (e.g. publishing and prose). Talking from personal experience, Buma Kor likened the relationship of author and publisher to that of bride and groom. Unfortunately, the proposed marriages seldom come true, rarely hold what they seemed to promise, mostly fail and end in miscarriages. What Buma Kor was referring to is the lack of viable structures that link the author with his reader in a scriptculture. Godfrey Tangwa referred in his round table talk to the lack of a reading tradition in West Cameroon: there are not many bookshops that deserve that name, which could provide readers with books. Publishers on their part have obviously failed to create distribution structures that bring their books onto the shelves of bookstores, and the few titles they offer are often poorly produced - bad finishing, unattractive covers, bad printing and binding but high prices that do not at all relate to the quality of the wares offered. The rapid growth of readership since the re-emergence of independent newspapers shows that the attitude of the audience is changing - a readership is emerging. It is now up to the booksellers, publishers, authors to convince this nascent readership, through the quality of writing, book production and presentation, that reading and buying books is rewarding - and price-worthy. Paragraphs 3 - 5 of the resolutions of the Workshop included in this book are a close reflection of the debate.

The deficiency in book publishing and distribution also explain the fact that prose writing and poetry - key genres of print-literature - were under-represented in the workshop. This is an area that needs special attention from both creators and critics. The popularity of topical writing - the columns of "No Trifling Matter" by Rotcod Gobata or "The Postman" in *Cameroon Post*, of "The Gospel" in the English *Le Messenger* and many other papers, indicates that reading habits beyond the mere news consumption or enjoyment of gossip is building up from which prose and poetry writers will eventually profit. There were complaints from the journalists that the "producers of culture" fail to inform them about oncoming events, while the latter accused the journalists of not publishing the information given. Whatever the case might be, there is certainly more space needed for the cultural debate in the press. And publishing a worthy poem or short story once in a while would certainly not deter the readers of newspapers.

The focus of attention was definitely on drama because it does not suffer from the constraints of the ailing publishing business and also because it has found ways of dealing with the censorship issue. A debate arose about the "literariness" - viz elitism - or the popularity of drama and theatre. The general critical and theoretical debate concerning popular genres in Africa, and of popular theatre in particular, has expanded rapidly during the last few years. Here, more clarification is required for the Cameroonian

context. Reducing the "popular - elitist" issue to a question of language (Pidgin or "formal" English) and style might lead the contenders to face each other at the wrong battle-front. Tackling the issue from the perspective of performance and communication will draw critical attention more to questions like audience participation, democratisation of the theatre medium and political mobilisation potentials, thereby replacing the criterion of "literary quality" with that of communicative effectiveness.

The upsurge in the creation and appreciation of Anglophone Cameroon writing is undoubtedly linked to the political processes that dominate the culturo-political atmosphere since "la concurrence eventuelle" first raised its head. This became very clear in the debates about the function of literature and the role of the writers. The majority of the participants obviously see literature "as part of the struggle" - as used to be the term for South Africa. And they would, therefore, also be prepared to do what the ANC cultural ideologue, Albie Sachs, called "solidarity criticism".

Political change, figuring at the very top of the agenda, led to a whole set of diverse and partly contradicting "prescriptions" of what writers in their writing should do and must not do. That the writer has to be committed is easily agreed on. Be popular, be direct, be topical, be militant; warnings that metaphor, imagery, allegory or historical precedent (to the present situation) are like the famous "chasing of the rat while the house is on fire" were put forward as strict guidelines for writers on the one hand. On the other hand, there was Father Tata's plea for aesthetic creation and his *monitum* that reducing creativity to protest means the end of creativity once the protest has achieved the change it has advocated. The controversy and the heatedness of this debate showed both that literature had no prescription and that it is - certainly at the moment - closely tied to the political changes in the country. Thus, a literature of protest as an inevitable reaction to *une littérature patriotique* appears to be the logical outcome of the Anglophone experience with "national unity".

One of the highlights of the Workshop was certainly the première of Babila Mutia's *Before This Time, Yesterday*, performed by the Yaounde University Theatre directed by Bole Butake. The première took place in the gardens of the Goethe Institut, and the importance of this historic occasion that the Workshop represents was underscored by the presence of the British and German Ambassadors at the performance, the latter of whom attended all the round table discussions as well.

Taking stock of, redefine, reassess Anglophone Cameroon writing - were these aims of the workshop achieved and how? One measure in the stock-taking was a book exhibition - mostly from the private libraries of the organisers - which was very intently studied by many participants.

As far as attendance is concerned, the organisers estimated - or rather hoped - that 20 to 30 people would attend the workshop. As it turned out, the hall was filled to capacity

during most of the day sessions (120 seats) and packed beyond capacity for the round table sessions in the evening. For the play performance also more spectators turned up than seats were available. This shows that the workshop definitely met with a strong demand on the part of the audience - most of them students, but also teachers, inspectors of education, journalists - some from as far as Bamenda or Buea and Victoria.

The recurrent demand from the audience was, why was a workshop like this not organised much earlier and will this now take place on a regular basis? This is an expression for the need of firm and formalised structures for Anglophone Cameroon writing - a need that was envisaged by the organisers but was put forward very strongly from the floor.

To create a nucleus around which such a structure can be built, the proceedings are published. These proceedings will serve as a reference, as a base on which future critical discourse in the field can focus. It was agreed that a regular publication outlet was necessary, thus *WEKA - A Journal of Anglophone Cameroon Writing and the Arts* was created. Nalova Lyonga was appointed editor, the themes for the first two issues were conceived, and it is now hoped that the first issue will be ready before the end of 1993.

As a follow-up activity, a specialised workshop for writers and publishers is envisaged for a later date. On this occasion the creation of a cooperative body for publication of Anglophone Cameroon writing will be the main issue.

A reference and data base for the study of Anglophone Cameroon writing was another strong demand. These proceedings, therefore, contain an up-to-date bibliography of Anglophone Cameroon writing and *WEKA* will carry as a fixed item an annual bibliography of critical and creative writing.

Participants of the workshop showed a lot of enthusiasm and dedication. Their contributions to the discussions revealed commitment, and also a strong, though restrained, anger. It became evident that a forum like the workshop was welcome not only as an occasion to vent bottled-up frustrations, but to define, through debate and controversy, a group identity and group spirit. The workshop certainly succeeded in creating a longstanding demand for a common platform - it did not create a false sense of homogeneity of Anglophone Cameroon writing but definitely enforced the spirit of togetherness, of belonging.

The proceedings of the workshop focus on the key issues that were raised. The editors, therefore, had to be selective in their choice of which papers should be published.

Bole Butake - Nalova Lyonga - Eckhard Breitingner

I

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Bate Besong

Literature in the Season of the Diaspora: Notes to the Anglophone Cameroonian Writer

Bate Besong*

Of Pariahs and Masons

Many of the leading cultural figures of their time, in all climates, have maintained the artist's traditional responsibility in addressing the question of meaning, in endeavouring to synthesize, in seeking to weld disparate fragments into a coherent reality. And, in times like these ...

The yeast of history, above all, as a creative resource can never be far from the troubadour's mind. A writer who has no sense of history is like a sparrow without wings, for the writer must be the visionary of living truth.

In fact, a writer without a sense of history is the Aesopian lion devoid of claws and teeth. Today, one hundred and fifty-one years after his death in 1832, we are meeting at the Goethe Institut, in Yaounde, to talk about how our work, as chief bannerbearers of our people, can become relevant; we are here to talk about how our roles as spokesmen of our people can be read and appreciated by those moved by their themes of thwarted hopes. We are here for a collective catharsis.

Goethe spent the period 1770-2 at the famous University of Strassbourg. Here, the young man fell under the influence of Professor Herder who persuaded him to drop his plan to write in the French language. Could it then be reasoned that Goethe, a giant of world literature, would have died in anonymity had he abandoned his native language for the romantic moonshine of Parisian cafe's and saloons?

May the vision of Wolfgang Goethe guide us here today.

An Ambushed Homecoming?

We are in affinity with the supreme colossus of the Harlem Renaissance, Dr. William Bughart du Bois. As W.E.B. said of the colour problem in the U.S.A., the Anglophone Cameroonian's very existence is the burning question of today.

* Winner of the 1992 A.N.A. Literature (Drama) Award

Consider: After the lunatic route we took from Foumban, as in a Dantean Inferno, the Anglophone Cameroonian occupies the centre of Hell.

The surrounding concentric rings of this smouldering infernal canyon may embrace a multitude of other victims in the present Cameroonian reality, but there is no doubt that our people, subjected to perpetual mental and psychological servitude, are the story-book victims of a cultural holocaust.

History has - since the biblical Cain and Abel - carved no grimmer monuments to its own propensity for unfathomable cynicism and evil.

Before we go, before we zoom off into the best-cushioned retirement in the haven of an anachronistic aesthetic - whose accoutrements are slavish metaphors, or literary bondage, whose by-products abound with mystical and decadent overtones. Or, like some of us have recently done: withdraw, into a life of ascetic contemplation in search of masturbatory succour by resorting, ostrich-like, to the tradition of popular balladry.

Fellow writers, before we zoom off into the best-cushioned limbo of art-for-art's-sake, a pause, please, to look at some of what three decades of re-unification has wrought for us: feudal oppression, mountains of suspicion and hate, retrogression, post-Foumban pauperisation, resentment. Indeed, we bear the scars of "brotherhood."

The gangrene-filled labyrinth of chaos that is *Pax Cameroona* today has put an end to our self-acclaimed title as the invincible super-heavyweight hey! hey! big-boss of the "new deal" world.

Since we are an inter-galactic nation, since we are situated somewhere between the planets Uranus and Neptune and, therefore, out of the Earth, we might have maintained our mystique if pampered locusts had not suddenly preyed over the national treasury. In fact, we might have maintained our mystique by avoiding the last eccentric presidential elections (we did call it a renaissance of democra-zy in this part of Africa, and so we had nothing to learn from Democracy - with a capital D!).

Alas! Good-bye to the last of our hurrahs!

The landscape of the past three decades has ruthlessly shown up all our political and economic illusions under the guise "of the bi-cultural character of the two unifying parts"; thus, graphically lending expression to the existentialist predicament of the Anglophone Cameroonian caught in the terrifying coils of a world beyond his comprehension.

We are in the season of harrowing self-analysis. We are the products of an age of profound discontent. We are an embattled people under the cancerous embrace of "national integration", fighting against titanic odds.

We are the biblical children of Ham, profoundly affected by cataclysmic changes and traumas which seem to toss us about like an Eliotean rag doll; hollow men, without speech; caught in the broken jaw, in the lost kingdom "of the prickly ... prickly pear" at "5 o'clock in the morning" sprawled in the tumid river. Alas!

And, yet, there was a time when people had faith, implicit faith - in this Union - without making any investigations!

But I ask you, where is that faith now? It has vanished. So utterly! The bonds have snapped. We carry the scars of "brotherhood" in a country so unaccustomed to candour.

The literature of a people is the mirror of that community. One cannot live in society and be free from that society. Calm yourselves, Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, fellow writers ... The literature of an embattled people must be the mirror of that society but, tell me: could a mirror which does not reflect things correctly be called a mirror?

The creative writer, in many ways, is an intellectual concerned with discovering the truth. His protean curiosity covers many fields of learning and knowledge. He is, of course, free to say and write what he likes without any restrictions.

There certainly is nothing wrong with proving all things and finding out the truth of a matter. And one, according to Vladimir Illyich Lenin, "needs to be sure of the foundations" of his "... creative itinerary ...", "of the basis for the facts he learns in life".

But if he is to be the salt of the earth, if he is to be the spice in a fragmented and spiritually rudderless society, if he is to become the leaven in a lump of dough infusing the Promethean muses' glory in a society influenced and controlled by the mephistophelian forces of Demorgorgon - as the penetrating and relentless analyzer of Cameroon society and social realities - his, the Anglophone Cameroon writer's questing mind that is, should be concerned with principles, purposes and the essence of things, rather than with mere appearances, rather than with mere workings.

The elysian-bred optimist may think the Anglophone Cameroon Question might be quickly resolved. That is far too blithe. The agony of the Anglophone Cameroon Question is compounded by the endless uncertainty as to whether there would ever be an end to it. Writers are inspired by the adversity of their day. So must we.

There could be no better test. There can be no better way of quantifying such human suffering. Could we draw from the memorable lines of the Jamaican-born African - American poet Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" to provide succour? Perhaps, a word of caution is still necessary.

Far be it from us to advocate any kind of monolithic, post-1992 one-party-national-assembly kind of literature; far be it from us to advocate a solution by means of a few key-note-decrees which, in the end, become as grotesque and laughable as that itinerant prophet who, having found the alchemist stone of literature, prescribed new *nostrums* for the immortality of national unity - By Decree! ... Don't laugh ...

No one can speak for us. Only those who daily live through the humiliations, the third-class citizenship, in the abattoir of servitude, only we can fully comprehend and explore these contradictions in a society undergoing such rapid and confusing transition.

Anglophone Cameroon Literature cannot make a single step forward until it understands - please note - the dubious and fragile environment that is National Unity, now: like the skull of some pre-historic brontosaurus, it has, in the last decade especially, become the Lake Nyos bomb of history, looming over the incubator of a poisonous brand of "national integration".

The writer must be in the pull of action. To arouse his Anglophone Cameroonian constituency from the apathy and despair into which it has sunk, the writer's *métier* must be transformed into handgrenades in his literary arsenal for venting his crusading spirit. He will fail most woefully, ostracized from his roots, as it were, if he tries to write in a style that is alien to him; very much - indeed - like that accursed man in Achebeiana who left his burning house to pursue a fleeing rat (Aeschylusean plots, Wordsworthian themes)!

True, the power of the writer is not always strong enough to change the political and social situation of his time but his art can become a fighting literature, he can write works which are artistically profound and politically correct: he can write works of indictment and works that show how his world is and could be.

Time for the Creative Boom

The Anglophone Cameroonian Writer must never forget his origins. His writing must depict the conditions of his people, expressing their spontaneous feelings of betrayal, protest and anger.

It must challenge. It must indict head on. His writing must open up the Chinese Wall of Opportunity, closed to his people for over three decades.

Our literature must convey with remarkable force the moods of the Anglophone Cameroonian caught in the assimilation-nightmare of sisyphian existence.

That literature must be inspired by an historical myth-informed consciousness. It must embody in bold relief the specific historical features of the entire Cameroonian reality.

We must not evade the issues raised by economic, social and political change.

We will be criticised, of course, for our attempt to be honest in treating these questions and in recognizing the frustration and agony of a people held as a hostage minority. But we must insist on the truth of what we write.

The Anglophone Cameroonian writer at home and in the diaspora must tell the outside world the story of his tragic land from the point of view of its hostage minority.

And, such a literature, fellow writers, can only be written by you: Anglophone Cameroonian writers, in the Anglophone Cameroonian language and on Anglophone Cameroonian subjects.

Pre-Independence Evolution of Western Education in Anglophone Cameroon

Solomon Nfor Gwei

1. Introduction

Writing, particularly literary writing, is an art which is acquired through training and personal experience. Whoever writes must first know how to read and write, acquire and develop the writing skill. The practice of any skills, including writing, leads to perfection. Cameroonians of both the English and French expressions have given to the world their literary works in English or French and some, very few indeed, in their mother tongues, and still others in German. English, French and German were introduced in Cameroon through the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and the British, French and German colonial powers whose educational systems have left an indelible impress on Cameroon. However, the credit for introducing Western education in Cameroon does not go to them but rather to the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) of London. This missionary body laid the foundation on which the educational structure in Cameroon has been built from nursery and primary through secondary to higher education. After laying the foundation, the BMS carried on the educational enterprise in Cameroon single-handedly until German annexation when the responsibility shifted, first to the German government and other missionary bodies and then, after the First World War, to Britain and France from whom the Cameroon government took over after independence.

The Christian missionary bodies and the colonial powers, particularly Britain and France, introduced and developed their systems of education and their effect on Cameroon is so far-reaching that it will continue to be felt for a long time. The inherited British and French systems, which an independent Cameroon has been trying to change and adapt to her realities have defied any serious reforms. Today the British and French educational systems and languages are in vogue. English and French are the media of instruction at all levels of education and the official languages of the Republic.

Western education, carried on during the colonial era by nongovernment agencies, had the permission, sanction and control of each ruling power. Government rules and regulations were developed into policies which shaped and gave concrete forms to the educational systems of the various colonial powers. Under each colonial regime, the bulk

of the educational enterprise was handled by private, voluntary agencies, mainly missionary organizations.

We shall now examine the beginning of Western education in Cameroon, look at its quantitative and qualitative development under the German and British colonial regimes and see how Cameroon writers, particularly those of English expression, were prepared by the various educational systems for their art.

II. Early Beginnings

Africans working as slaves on plantations in Jamaica and who were converted to Christianity through George Liele, a Black American Baptist preacher from Georgia, U.S.A., motivated the introduction of Western education in Cameroon. William Knibb, one of the British Baptist Missionaries (BMS) who succeeded Liele, fought very hard for their emancipation. When they were set free on August 1, 1832 they decided to return to Africa, their fatherland, to free their people from the bondage of sin and ignorance. But they had no means to carry out this mission themselves. They therefore sent several delegations to the BMS Headquarters in London, led by William Knibb, to appeal to the BMS to launch this lofty African mission. And they were ready to serve as missionaries and teachers.

On June 3, 1840 the BMS Committee resolved "to commence a mission to Western Africa". In October, 1840 John Clarke, a BMS missionary, to Jamaica and Dr. G.K. Prince, a medical practitioner in Jamaica, were sent out on a preliminary mission to West Africa to explore the possibility of planting Christianity there.

They arrived at Port Clarence, Fernando Po (now Equatorial Guinea) on January 1, 1841 on the ship, the "Golden Spring". When the captain of the ship refused them passage up the River Niger, they stayed on the island where they found a large number of freed slaves who spoke English. Although they were encouraged by the enthusiastic welcome in Fernando Po and started teaching, preaching and exploring possibilities for more extensive work on the island, their main concern was the continent. The Cameroon Mountain on the mainland across the strait beckoned them. They wasted no time in crossing over to Douala where they met King Bell who accepted their proposal to send him missionaries and teachers. He gave them a piece of land for that purpose. King Akwa also accepted a similar proposal from them and pledged to build a house for them and a school where the native children would be taught to read and write (M.H. July 1941, pp. 99-100). They went across to Bimbia where King William received them warmly and indicated his readiness to receive missionaries and school teachers.

Before returning to England in February 1842, they had opened the first mission station in Port Clarence, Fernando Po, started a church of five members, a church school and a

Bible class. They passed through Jamaica where many Jamaican Christians, impressed by their report, offered themselves for service in Africa. In England churches pledged their support for the West African Mission and several individuals offered themselves as missionaries and teachers.

The first batch of missionaries and teachers left in 1842, another in July, 1843 and a third, which included 42 Jamaicans led by Alfred Saker, left on December 1, 1843 and arrived in Fernando Po on February 16, 1844.

The first seeds of Western education were sown in Cameroon by Joseph Merrick who had come with the second batch which included Dr. & Mrs Prince, Alexander Fuller and Mrs. Merrick. In 1843 when Joseph Merrick spent two months in Douala learning the Douala language, he taught some children and adults to read but had to leave abruptly for Clarence in December to meet new missionaries who had just arrived.

On a second visit to Bimbia in 1844, after a brief one in 1843, Joseph Merrick found King William and his people ready for a school and a mission station. In a letter to the BMS Secretary in London, Merrick stated:

... not only is King William himself favourable to the settlement of Christian teachers at Bimbia, but all his people are, and seem to be convinced that we have come to seek their good ... (M.H., September 1844, p. 350).

In April 1844, Joseph Merrick opened the first school on Cameroon soil in Bimbia on a piece of land he bought from the King. It had an enrolment of about sixty children and Angus Duckett, one of the teachers from Jamaica was put in charge.

Merrick built two houses in May 1844, set up a printing press and settled down to build, improve his school and devote more time to the study of the Isubu language. He began the printing of his "first class book" and an Isubu vocabulary book. After mastering the Isubu language, he printed some "class books" in Isubu. When missionaries from Fernando Po arrived in Bimbia, Merrick handed over preaching and other activities to them and concentrated on improving the school and printing more literature and textbooks.

Alfred Saker, who arrived in Douala in June, 1845, opened the second school in Cameroon (the first in Douala) at Akwa Town on June 23, 1845. The school also served Bell Town, one mile away. Alfred Saker and Horton Johnson embarked on building a mission and schoolhouse which was completed in November. The station was named "Bethel", meaning House of God.

Saker undertook an intensive study of the Douala language, prepared his first and second "class books" for the school which Merrick printed at Bimbia.

Saker set up a boarding school and a training centre at Bethel, headed by Horton Johnson. He selected some dedicated, promising and intelligent young men for intensive training to assist him as teachers and church workers. He saw education as the best

means of helping the indigenous people and of establishing a more permanent mission in Cameroon. He devoted time and energy in mastering the Douala language, producing textbooks, translating the Bible into Douala, and teaching young men and women to read and write. His main aim was to help Cameroonians read the Bible.

The Bethel school turned out capable young men who served as teachers and church leaders. The performance of these young men encouraged many Cameroonians who, seeing the value of Western education, sent their own children to school. Several traditional rulers invited missionaries to establish schools in their own areas as well. Bethel became the headquarters of the Cameroon mission and the training ground for teachers and church leaders in Cameroon. In order to get more qualified teachers, Saker sent three promising young women to Sierra Leone. One of them returned in 1856 to teach at Bethel.

Although younger missionaries accused Saker of wasting funds and devoting much attention to "secular" rather than "spiritual" aspects of missionary work, he continued with his educational and literary activities. By June 1856 he had printed 1,000 school lessons and had 3,000 more ready for the press. In June 1860 he published his first version of the Douala *New Testament* and in 1872 he completed his translation of the entire Bible into Douala. He also published a large Douala dictionary and revised the Douala grammar book which he had earlier published. The printing press was transferred from Bimbia to Bethel and Joseph Jackson Fuller from Jamaica put in charge. Fuller became one of Saker's able assistants and was instrumental in opening many schools and training indigenous leaders. He translated *Pilgrim's Progress* into Douala.

Two years after the establishment of Bethel school, another school was opened at Bell Town. John Pinnock, a Jamaican missionary / teacher, opened a school in Aboland, north of Douala in 1858. During the 1860s and 1870s more schools were established in Deido Town, Scorico, Dikolo, Malimba, Yaba Kalacki, Jebale, Kalabi and Dibombari, all in the Douala district. In 1880 a new school was opened in Bakundu, the farthest point inland reached by the missionaries.

When the BMS was expelled from the Spanish Island of Fernando Po in 1858, Alfred Saker transferred the Clarence Baptist Church to a piece of land he bought from King William of Bimbia and named it "Victoria" after Queen Victoria of Great Britain. Victoria was considered as a highway into the interior of Africa and was therefore considered a very important location. The transfer of Baptist families from Port Clarence necessitated the opening of a school. It started informally in 1859 and in 1860 John Pinnock was transferred from Aboland to formally open and head the school whose initial enrolment was about twenty. It soon attracted more pupils from Douala and Fernando Po. The school was later divided into a boys' and a girls' school whose

enrolment in 1880 stood at 130 boys and 80 girls. Teachers recruited in England, some of them university graduates, joined the teaching staff of the school which became one of the best staffed and most prestigious in Cameroon.

John Pinnock opened another school at Fish Town along Amboise Bay.

Q.W. Thomson founded a school at Bonjongo, (six miles from Victoria) in 1872 and set out to teach those who had never "seen a letter or handled a book before", English unknown to them and "Bakwili" unknown to the teacher. To Thomson, education was primordial as it enabled a convert to Christianity to read the Bible for himself and understand it without assistance from another person. In a letter to the BMS he stated *inter alia*:

Can you not see why I pressed so much for schools among a people such as these? ...
I put education second to nothing. Our work should be to give God's truth and the ability to read and understand. (*BMS Annual Report*, 1873, p. 113).

After five years of hard work and determination his pupils could read the Bible with ease.

While Alfred Saker retired in 1876 after thirty-two years of meritorious service in Cameroon, Thomson died in 1883. These two missionaries' contribution to education in Cameroon was remarkable. David Livingstone, a contemporary of Saker's, had this to say about his accomplishments: "... the work of Alfred Saker in Cameroon and Victoria is, in my judgment, the most remarkable work on the African Coast" (H. Johnston, p. 42.) Germany's sudden annexation of Cameroon on July 12, 1884 and the obstacles and restrictions faced by BMS missionaries, induced the latter to withdraw from her Cameroon mission field to the Congo, handing over its schools and churches to the Basel Mission, a German-speaking missionary society with headquarters in Basel, Switzerland in 1886. Eleven schools, with a total enrolment of 368, were handed over. All the Cameroonian teachers and a few BMS missionary teachers were employed by the Basel Mission to continue teaching until the German language was introduced into all the schools.¹

What conclusion can be drawn from the forty-two year period (1844-86) of the BMS efforts in education in Cameroon? It laid the foundation of Western education based on the English charity school system. The establishment, expansion and development of schools were part and parcel of the BMS missionary objective of preaching, teaching, healing and social work. Jamaican Baptist Christians, other educationally minded missionaries who believed in education as the best approach to evangelism and the most lasting service to be rendered to Cameroonians contributed to a rapid expansion and development of education and the production of trained indigenous leadership. The use

¹ Joseph Jackson Fuller's unpublished work entitled *Recollections. The West African Mission of the Baptist Missionary Society* is a treasure carefully preserved by the BMS.

of indigenous languages as the media of instruction was seen by the missionaries as the best approach to education. The English language, the three R's and scriptures figured prominently on the curriculum. The absence of post-primary educational facilities in Cameroon led the BMS to send pupils abroad for further training.

Literary and Educational Work

The conviction of the missionaries that success in the West African mission depended largely on their acquisition of the African languages resulted in considerable literary activity. Three African languages were mastered and reduced to writing. John Clarke paid special attention to the Fernandian language, Joseph Merrick to Isubu, and Alfred Saker to the Douala language.

Clarke wrote an introduction to the Fernandian language and published his translations of portions of the Scripture in it.

Merrick studied Douala and printed a class-book and portions of the Bible in the language. He also translated several portions of the Bible into Isubu.

Saker put out several publications - hymns, translations of portions of Scripture - before his *Douala New Testament* came out in 1860 and the complete Bible in 1872. The Douala Bible, which today is widely read in Cameroon, was the greatest literary accomplishment of Saker's, who spent twenty years on this significant work.

J. J. Fuller, whose proficiency in the language was highly esteemed by the Doualas, translated Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into Douala.

III. Development under Colonial Regimes

Germany's annexation of Cameroon on July 12, 1884 ushered in the colonial rule which lasted till 1960 for the eastern part under the French and 1961 for the western part under British rule. The whole educational enterprise was brought under colonial rule as from July 12, 1884. The expansion of educational facilities and the qualitative development of education undoubtedly expanded and increased opportunities for Cameroon writers. As will be seen, the colonial educational systems deliberately conditioned the minds of Cameroonians to Western thought forms causing ardent reaction from concerned Westerners. The disfunctional consequences of colonial education are still felt today in our country. Some of the writings of Cameroonians, whether Anglophone or Francophone, are in reaction to this. Some Cameroonians have been so Westernized that they neither feel at home with the West which some of them call home, nor in Cameroon, their Fatherland. The efforts of Christian missionary bodies in devising

realistic educational systems for Cameroonians according to their Christian principles were forestalled by government policies which fashioned colonial educational systems.

A. The German Colonial Administration: 1884-1914

Christian Missions

German annexation of Cameroon on July 12, 1884 did not put an end to missionary educational efforts. Before pulling out of Cameroon in 1886 after 42 years of evangelical and educational activities, the BMS ensured that its work continued.

The German colonial administration handled only five percent of all educational activities in Cameroon. Ninety-five percent of all schools were run by missionary bodies such as the Basel Missionaries, the American Presbyterian Missionaries (1885), the Roman Catholic Pallotine Fathers of Hamburg, the German Baptist Missionaries and Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1891).

In 1910 the Pallotine Fathers taught 15,801 boys and 665 girls in 16 main schools and 72 feeder schools, while the Baptist had 1,755 boys and 78 girls in five main schools and 45 feeder schools. In 1911 the Basel Mission operated 243 village schools, five boys' and two girls' schools, and a seminary with a total enrolment of 10,522.

The German colonial government ran only four schools in 1913 with 833 pupils as against 631 mission schools with 49,000 pupils which operated in accordance with government regulations. The Basel Mission intensified its educational efforts raising the number of its schools to 384 with a total enrolment of 22,818 in 1914. The Gossner Mission, a German Protestant Mission, joined the other mission bodies and opened its first school in Cameroon in 1914, just before World War I.

The curriculum in all mission schools was prescribed by the colonial government. However, mission schools were permitted to offer instruction in Christian education, indigenous languages, shoe-making, tailoring, cabinet-making, brick-making, carpentry, machinery, sewing, laundry, ironing, and many other practical skills.

Government Involvement

When Germany became a colonial power, Chancellor Bismarck did not want German colonies to become a financial burden to his government. This explains the hesitation of the German colonial administration to get directly involved in the costly education enterprise in Cameroon. She left it almost entirely in the hands of Christian missionary bodies throughout the colonial era.

In 1886, Bismarck charged Carl Woermann, head of the Hamburg traders who were instrumental in the German annexation of Cameroon, to work out the general principles for an educational programme for Cameroon. His suggested programme included Arithmetic, Reading, Writing, German and some Religious Instruction.

Through the efforts of Governor Freiherr Julius von Soden, the German government decided to get involved in Cameroon education. Dr. Theodor Christaller, a former Basel missionary to the Gold Coast established the first government school in 1888 at Bell Town, Douala, on a piece of land given by King Bell. In 1890 he opened a second school at Deido, Douala. A few years later a third school was opened in Victoria. Christaller was pressing for the opening of a library and a post-elementary school when he died suddenly of black-water fever in 1896.

Jesko von Puttkamer, who succeeded von Soden as Governor in 1895 took measures to limit or even stop government involvement in education. He handed over one of the government schools in Douala to the Basel Mission and prohibited the teaching of Douala in School.

In 1904 a fourth government school was opened in Yaounde, and a fifth in Garoua in 1906 with an enrolment of 45 with Charles Steane, a BMS trained school teacher, as headmaster. Arabic and German were added to the curriculum, and attendance at the local mosque every Friday made compulsory in order to stop rumours of government's intention to impose Christianity on Moslem pupils.

In 1912 government had only four schools: Douala with 362 pupils, Yaounde with 160, Garoua with 57 and Victoria 257. The teachers in all government schools were Europeans, except Garoua, with two Cameroonians as assistant teachers. Three new schools were planned for Edea, Kribi and Nkongsamba. The 1914 budget had provisions for the construction of six new primary schools and a secondary school which never materialized due to the outbreak of World War I.

Government Educational Policy

The first educational conference convened in 1907 in Douala by Governor Theodor Seitz to formulate official educational policy for Cameroon was attended by government officials and representatives of the various Christian missions running schools in Cameroon. Following the decisions of that conference the Governor issued the decree of April 25, 1910, according to which no European language other than German was to be taught in Cameroon schools. The use of Douala was restricted to the coastal area but other vernaculars were permitted. All schools were to be inspected to ensure that German was being taught as decreed. Mission schools were required to prepare their pupils for state examinations and to promote German culture and civilization. Only

mission schools that taught German and adhered to government educational policies qualified for grants-in-aid which were calculated in accordance with pupil enrolment. Another decree issued on April 23, 1913 made school attendance obligatory, introduced school fees, the duration of primary education to be five years after which successful candidates earned the First School Leaving Certificate which qualified them for the civil service. The prescribed five-year primary school curriculum for both government and mission schools was as follows:

Table 1

Official Curriculum Prescribed For The Five-Year Primary School Course On April 25, 1910 And April 23, 1913		
Year (Class)	Subject	Hours per Week
1	Reading and Writing in German	2
	Moral Principles and Behaviour	2
	Simple Arithmetic (Calculation)	2
	total	6
2	Reading and Writing in German	3
	Moral Principles and Behaviour	2
	Simple Arithmetic (Calculation)	3
	total	8
3	Elements of German Grammar, Orthography	4
	Natural History	2
	Arithmetic	3
	Geography	1
	total	10
4	Reading, Writing, Explanation of Chosen Pieces (German)	4
	Arithmetic	3
	History of the Territory	1
	Natural History	1
	Domestic Economy (Skills)	1
	total	10
5	Exercises in German Grammar	4
	Matrix System	3
	History of the German Empire	1
	Natural History	1
	Domestic Economy (Skills)	1
	total	10

Source: René Costedoat, pp. 118-119.

It is evident from the curriculum that pupils were meant to master German grammar and orthography, write essays in German, explain texts in German. Vocational education was enhanced by scholarships and awards. The introduction of a dualistic approach to education, combining the academic and the practical aspects, is an outstanding

contribution to Cameroon education by the German regime. The system of education designed for Cameroon was assimilationist in character.

B. British Administration: 1916-1961

In 1925 a government committee laid down the principles of educational policies in its report. The provisions of this policy included the use of vernacular textbooks, a system of inspection and supervision to ensure the vitality and efficiency of the educational system. Qualified African teachers, both men and women, were to be adequately represented on the teaching staff. The policy advocated a simple, realistic education for the masses and a more advanced education for leaders.

Educational Efforts of Christian Missions

The long experience of Christian missions in the educational enterprise in Cameroon since 1844 led the British Administration in 1922 to decide that the bulk of education "in due course come under the direct control of mission societies who are in a better position than the administration to develop disciplined character ..." (Great Britain, C.O., West Africa 1923, pp. 43-44). The missions active in education at that time were the Basel Mission, the German Baptist Mission and the Roman Catholic Mill Hill Fathers. The number of schools established and run by each of these denominations and their involvement in education from 1925 to 1937 are as presented in the table below:

Table 2

Number of Schools and School Enrolments by Denomination: 1925-1938

Year	Basel Mission Schools		Roman Catholic Schools		Baptist Schools	
	Number	Enrolment	Number	Enrolment	Number	Enrolment
1925	114	3207	6	503		
1926	130	3935	6	504		
1928	255	5845	4	310	18	294
1929	193	4801	6	625	2	101
1930	160	4266	6	690	15	379
1932	153	3490	8	756	15	459
1933	117	3390	7	944	14	558
1934	124	3717	8	987	16	807
1935	136	4369	15	1389	15	647
1936	154	4929	39	2327	17	751
1937	161	6067	46	2589	20	884

Compiled from Great Britain's Annual Reports to the League of Nations.

These are figures for government-aided schools only. Figures for unassisted schools are not available.

Apart from these three Christian denominations, the Native Authorities and the Administering Government were also involved in education.

Native Authority (N.A.) and Involvement in Education

Native Authority was an indirect rule system based on the principle that native institutions were inherently valuable as agencies of government. The N.A.s had their own treasuries under the custody of the District Officer.

Southern Cameroons was divided into four administrative divisions: Victoria, Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda. The N.A.s of the various divisions were required to run their own schools. Whereas school buildings and teachers' houses were to be constructed by the local populations, teachers' salaries, school equipment, cost of books, and other finances were the responsibilities of the N.A.s.

The first 10 N.A. schools were established in 1922, with an enrolment of 843. In 1928 there were 14 schools with 939 students, in 1938, 19 schools with 1636 students. From 1922 to 1931 all N.A. schools provided elementary education for the masses and served as feeder schools for government and mission schools.

Meanwhile government stipulated in its Educational Ordinance of 1926 the standard VI Pass Certificate as the minimum qualification for teaching in Cameroon schools.

These regulations discouraged inferior standards of education, making it imperative for various educational agencies to provide education that met the standards set for all schools in the territory.

Organization

In 1931 primary education was organized into the following three stages:

- Infants (two classes: I-II)
- Elementary (four classes: I-IV)
- Middle (two classes: I-II)

Higher Elementary classes replaced Middle Classes in 1937.

After World War II primary education was reorganized into: a Junior Department comprising Infants I and II and standards I and II and a Senior Department comprising standards III-VI.

Language of Instruction

The Colonial Office's Advisory Committee stated in its 1925 report *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa* that Cameroon was "a country of innumerable languages" and, therefore, recommended that English, with a limited use of "Pidgin English" be the medium of instruction. The British administration was reluctant to use as medium of instruction either the vernacular recommended by the Cameroon Provisional School Committee for the first three years or "Pidgin English". The Colonial administration held that none of these languages was likely to develop a literature of its own.

To improve on teacher training, a vacation course was offered at Buea in 1923 for government, N.A. and mission school teachers. In 1925 a Normal Class was opened at Victoria Government School. The required subjects were School Method and Principles of Teaching, Dictation, Grammar, Composition, Geography, English History, Algebra and Geometry (for male students); Arithmetic, Measurement, Domestic Science (for female students).

In 1932 the Normal Class was converted into an Elementary Training Centre and transferred to Kake near Kumba. A Practising School for the centre was opened at Kake in 1935 with 30 pupils who, upon completion, were qualified to teach up to Class IV of an elementary school. The curriculum consisted of English: Oral Composition, Phonetics, Written English; Practical Arithmetic (for 2nd and 3rd years); simple Geometric Constructions, Quantitative Calculations; Scale Drawing; Geography; History; Physical Training; Agriculture and Teaching Practice.

A two-year Higher Elementary Training course was started at the Government Elementary Training Centre, Kumba, in 1945. In 1946 it became Government Teachers' Training Centre (GTTC), Kumba, training both Grades III and II teachers for government, N.A. and voluntary agency schools.

The training of teachers for Cameroon schools was not limited to institutions in Cameroon. Both government and voluntary agencies, particularly missions, sent teachers for training to Nigeria and elsewhere. Of the 104 Cameroonians doing the Teacher Grade II course in 1955, 27 were in Nigerian institutions (Great Britain, Rept; 1955).

Secondary Education

No secondary school was established in Cameroon prior to 1939. The whole question of secondary education for the British Cameroons was discussed in December 1938 at Buea by the Provincial School Committee. The local authorities and Mission representatives pressed hard on the administration to establish secondary educational facilities.

In 1939, the Roman Catholic Mission established the first secondary school in Cameroon, St. Joseph's College, Sasse. It offered full secondary education for boys from all parts of Cameroon and from all denominations.

The second secondary school was opened at Bali, Bamenda in 1949 by the Basel Mission. It became known as Cameroon Protestant College in 1957, when the Cameroon Baptist Mission joined the Basel Mission in running it.

In 1957, the first girls' secondary school, Queen of the Rosary College, was opened at Okoyong, in Mamfe.

These three colleges were the only secondary schools in the British Territory prior to independence. All of them prepared their students for the University of Cambridge School Certificate Examination and the West African School Certificate Examination. The syllabi for these examinations included: English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, French and Latin.

Higher Education

Although Western education was introduced in 1844, by the time of independence no institution of higher education had been established. The BMS educational efforts ended at the primary level. The German Imperial Government's plan to carry education beyond the primary level was followed by the outbreak of World War I. Under the British and French colonial administrations, education ended at the post-primary level.

The U.N. Trusteeship Council put pressure on the British administration to provide for higher education in her territory. Britain, however, referred to the availability of scholarships for studying abroad. Cameroonians, seeking university education, went to Ibandan, Legon, Fourah Bay, or universities in Britain, the US.

Not all that the West brought to Cameroon through Western education was positive. Many Cameroonians, Anglophones and Francophones, have been westernized through the colonial educational systems. Many Cameroonians rejected their traditional values and customs in favour of those of the West. Through colonial education they came to know more about the literatures of Europe than their own literatures.

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Anglophone Cameroon Writing in Relation to Textbooks in Cameroon Schools

Leke Tambo

In this paper an Anglophone Cameroon citizen is taken to mean a person whose first official language, in the context of the Cameroon Constitution, is English. Although Cameroonian Anglophones by this definition may hail from any part of the country, their base is mainly the South-West and North-West Provinces.

With regard to the concept of Anglophone Cameroon writing, I would define it in broader terms to include works of literature and other written material by Anglophone Cameroonians in the different disciplines of knowledge. Additionally, to be considered for discussion, the piece of writing should be scholarly or valuable in terms of the public interest. Writings of a purely private nature by Anglophone Cameroonians would, in this respect, be excluded from a discussion of Anglophone writing.

Having clarified the sense in which I use the expression, "Anglophone Cameroon writing", I would like to examine that writing in the area of school textbooks. The critical questions for discussion are: to what extent does Anglophone Cameroon writing meet the textbook need in Anglophone primary and secondary schools? What are some of the major problems related to textbook writing and distribution in Cameroon? What strategies could be used to improve the situation?

As background to that discussion, the paper will review two pedagogic concerns: the role of textbooks in school learning and the criteria for determining their suitability.

I. Some Pedagogic Concerns Related to Textbooks as an Instructional Medium

The Role of Textbooks in School Learning

One of the major challenges of socio-cultural and economic development in Africa since 1960, the so-called African independence year, has been the reform and development of the educational system. Writing as early as 1962, Kitchen (1962, p. 8) anticipated this challenge and observed aptly that the African states face a far more complex task than most people realize in adapting the educational systems of a colonial era to the political and social demands and economic realities of a new age.

A crucial aspect in this task of adapting the inherited colonial education system to the socio-economic and political realities of these countries has been the development of teaching and learning materials, especially books.

Books belong to the category of print medium and have the advantage over other media, such as film and electronic devices, of being relatively inexpensive, easily distributed, high in content / versatility and portable (Sleeman, Coburn and Rockwell, 1979, p. 116). They therefore remain central to the development and distribution of knowledge which is a key concern in education (Altbach, 1976a, p. 4).

With regard to classroom teaching and learning, it has been observed that 70 to 90 percent of classroom decisions are based on textbooks (Muther, 1985, p. 5). This situation is even more so in developing countries where the bulk of teachers is often relatively less qualified for teaching and therefore depend for the most part on the textbook (Altbach, 1976b, p. 83.) Moreover, in many of these countries, other instructional media such as film, computers, television and other teaching devices are virtually unavailable.

In the case of most African countries, King (1990, p. 215), while drawing attention to the general shortage of learning materials in the schools, considers the paucity of textbooks and supplementary materials to be a serious problem of educational development.

Writing in the context of Cameroon, Yembe (1985, p. 28) contends that "the problem of shortage of suitable books and equipment needs to be resolved if quality of learning is to be raised".

Thus the role of textbooks in school learning and teaching lies in the facilitating role they play in the learning process and in the advantages they enjoy over other forms of instructional media.

Criteria for Determining the Suitability of School Textbooks

Although there are no generally acceptable criteria for evaluating or determining the suitability of textbooks for school learning, many would agree on those that have been suggested by Osborn, Jones and Stein (1985, pp. 9-16). These are: text structure, coherence, unity, audience appropriateness, and graphics.

Text structure refers to the arrangement of ideas in a text as well as the nature of the relationships connecting the ideas. The way ideas are arranged in a textbook plays an important role in reading and comprehension.

Coherence describes the flow of ideas in a textbook. It can be evaluated at two levels: global and local. Global coherence is the integration of ideas across chapters while local coherence has to do with the flow of ideas at the paragraph and sentence levels. Aspects of global coherence are introductions, overviews, summaries, and visual displays or

diagrams. Those related to local coherence are such items as headings, subheadings, and the use of numbers or letters for enumeration of specific points.

Text unity refers to purpose. When a text addresses a single or unified purpose and does not stray from that purpose by including irrelevant and distracting information, it can be said that it possesses unity.

Audience factors revolve around the knowledge level of readers, regarding such concerns as their familiarity with a topic, complexity of concepts, sentence structure and length, as well as vocabulary.

Graphics are pictures, tables, charts, graphs and layouts. When graphics are well integrated with text, comprehension tends to be enhanced and vice versa. It is therefore often advisable for authors and publishers to select graphics with care.

Having outlined some criteria for evaluating the suitability of textbooks, it is logical to attempt to relate these criteria to textbooks written by Anglophone writers. This issue will be discussed as an aspect of the response of Anglophone Cameroon writers to the textbook need in Cameroon schools.

II. Anglophone Cameroon Writing and the Textbook Need in Anglophone Cameroon Schools

Anglophone Cameroon writing in relation to the textbook need in Anglophone Cameroon schools will be discussed here in terms of the quantity and quality. These two aspects are interrelated in the sense that for material to be counted as a school textbook, it should possess some acceptable level of quality.

Quantity of School Textbooks by Cameroon Anglophone Writers

Since not all the books written by Anglophone Cameroonians can be considered as suitable for school learning, the annual national school booklist issued by the Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) will be taken here as an effective indicator of the response of Anglophone writers to the textbook need in the schools.

The procedure for determining this response will be as follows: for each major subject taught in the primary and secondary schools, the number of textbooks found on the MINEDUC booklist will be shown. Next, the number of these recommended books written by Anglophones, either solely by themselves or in partnership with foreign authors, will be indicated. Finally, this number will be expressed in percentage terms. Tables I and II, based on data from the 1992/1993 booklist, depict the situation:

Table I: Anglophone Cameroon Writing in the Primary School National Booklist, 1992/1993.

Subject	Number of Books Recommended	Written by Anglophone Cameroonians	Percentage	Author(s)
English Language	3	1	33%	Ndangam / Weir
Hygiene	3	0	0%	-
Civics	1	1	100%	Tazifor
Mathematics	2	2	100%	Amin / Anucam
Geography	2	1	50%	Tita
Rural Science	1	1	100%	Tita
Gen. Knowledge	2	2	100%	Anucam / Wangmonde
History	2	2	100%	Fomenky / Gwanfogbe

Table II: Anglophone Cameroon Writing in the General Secondary School National Booklist, 1992/93

Subject	Number of Books Recommended	Written by Anglophone Cameroonians	Percentage	Author(s)
English Language	7	0	0%	-
English Literature	29	3 29	10%	Eba / Mesack / Jumban
History	6	2	33%	Fanso / Tazifor
Geography	17	2	11%	Ngwa / Gwanfogbe
Economics	5	1	20%	Mbua
Mathematics	7	0	0%	-
Chemistry	5	0	0%	-
Physics	7	0	0%	-
Biology	8	1	12%	Stramalingam

By way of analysis, it can be observed from Table I that the response of Anglophone Cameroon writers to the textbook need at the primary level is adequate. In key subjects, like Mathematics, General Knowledge, History and Civics, Anglophone Cameroon writers score 100 percent. However, more effort is needed in the areas of English Language and Geography.

Table II, which describes the situation at the general secondary level, depicts a much less impressive situation. Apart from History in which Anglophone Cameroon writers score 33 percent, foreign authors are virtually in complete control of textbook writing.

The influence of foreign authors is particularly visible in the subject areas of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and English Language, where Anglophone writers score 0 percent.

Similar trends were observable in the technical secondary school booklist.

It could therefore be said that Anglophone Cameroon writers are virtually in control of textbook writing at the primary school level. At the secondary level, however, the situation is, to say the least, alarming because it is only in one subject (history) that Cameroonians are making some significant contribution.

The Quality of School Textbooks by Anglophone Cameroon Writers

If the question of quantity or number of effective textbooks written by Anglophone Cameroonians could be assessed, to some extent, by analysing the recommended books on the national booklist, their quality or suitability may be determined by systematically applying evaluative criteria, such as the ones outlined earlier in this paper.

To the best of this writer's knowledge, no such attempts have been made in Cameroon. It is supposed that the annual national booklist is arrived at through the application of some formal evaluative criteria. But over the years, no such criteria have been made public. Under these circumstances, it is not clear, for instance, whether Anglophone Cameroon writers dominate the textbook supply at the primary school level because their books score highly in quality or whether this is simply because they have many books available on the market at this level.

In the absence of some formally formulated criteria for evaluating textbooks in Cameroon, this writer considers it unfair to attempt an evaluation of textbooks by Anglophone Cameroon writers. Such an attempt would appear to require a formal study, a task considered to be beyond the scope of this paper.

III. Problems Related to Textbook Writing and Distribution in Cameroon

Anglophone Cameroon writers do experience a number of problems related to the writing, publishing and distribution of their books. These problems are, in many ways, responsible for the influence foreign authors continue to exert on the book scene in Anglophone Cameroonian schools.

Writing

The writing of textbooks, unlike that of fiction and other literary genres, is not basically a creative activity. Since textbooks, to be valuable, must contain up-to-date information in their fields, their writers need to keep abreast of the latest developments in the fields in which they specialize.

In order for writers to keep abreast of new developments in their fields of specialization, they should be active in study and research. This is where the Cameroon textbook writer may fall short of expectation. In the absence of good library and research facilities, some writers are inclined to plagiarize from the works of other authors and to deal in obsolete ideas. Moreover, their books may go for years without revision.

Another problem of the Cameroon textbook writer is the tendency to work alone. Cameroon writers, like many Cameroon business men, have not developed a team spirit or approach which, in some countries, is used by writers to pull their knowledge and skills together. Indeed, looking at Tables I and II above, one would notice that only two books in primary History (Fomenky / Gwanfogbe), and one book in primary English (Ndangam / Weir) enjoy co-authorship.

Cameroon textbook writers, like writers in other fields, also experience the problem of incentives or motivation. They are not often given adequate recognition by society which, though emerging from the grip of an oral culture, still reserves more respect and honour for the administrator and politician. Related to this problem is the fact that textbook writers in certain fields such as History, Civics and even Literature have had, until recently, to be extremely cautious about interpreting national events because the idea of academic freedom appeared to be considered by some as a luxury. Happily, this situation is now more or less something of the past.

Publishing

The ultimate purpose of textbook writers is to publish their manuscripts. For this to happen, they must find a publisher who is not only knowledgeable about the textbook market, but also prepared and willing to take certain risks. Writers and publishers therefore constitute what Luey (1988, p.4) calls the publishing partnership. The

interaction of writers and publishers determines, to a large extent, the supply of textbooks in a school system. Other factors that may influence the situation would be the reading attitude of the public, the literacy rate, availability of capital, printing infrastructure, and government policy.

In the absence of viable indigenous publishers, Cameroon textbook writers have to deal, for the most part, with foreign multinational publishers who are more inclined to supporting books that enjoy a multinational market than those that are limited to the local market.

As if to make it further difficult for the Cameroon writer to find such a publisher, Cameroon government policy in the area of school textbooks has long favoured the prescription by the MINEDUC, at the beginning of each year, of a list of books to be used in primary and secondary schools. In effect, only one or two textbooks may be recommended for each school subject. Since the Cameroon public's attitude to reading tends to be fairly negative, MINEDUC's book policy is, to all intents and purposes, the basic factor influencing the decisions of publishers. Books tend to be published only if their publishers are in some way certain that they will find a place as a basal text on the national booklist. As Enow (1991, p. 12) points out, publishers are reluctant to invest money only to have their books relegated because only one book can be chosen.

Cameroon writers who cannot find some multinationals naturally turn to the few indigenous publishers who appear to be budding on the Cameroon publishing scene. But, because the competition among publishers for their books to be selected by MINEDUC is very intense (Tambo, 1990, p. 35), indigenous publishers are often unable to protect their books.

Enow (1991) documents one case of this competition:

In that year (1986) our national inspectors for English proposed a local book, *Basic Stages Primary English Course*, to replace a European book. That year, the European publisher's book was retained on the list because the inspectors had not expressly written to publishers to ask them to revise their books. The next year, the local *Basic Stages* was put on the list ... The European publisher then engaged in a lengthy campaign to get out the local book. In 1988/89 the local book was thrown away for good. (p. 11).

Writers who patronize local publishers experience a further disadvantage. This has to do with editing and illustration. It is well known that many books produced locally are often poor in this aspect. Cameroon writers who value high quality in their work must endeavour to take responsibility for their own editing and illustration, a task which is not often easy to accomplish.

Book Distribution

Distribution refers to the process publishers establish for disseminating what is published (Lightfoot, 1976, p. 71).

For school textbooks in Cameroon, the distribution process is fairly simple. Publishers depend on bookshops, bookshops on schools and schools on parents and students. The bookshop, in the absence of other agents, such as book clubs and viable libraries, plays a key role since the other partners in the distribution process converge on it. The important role played by the bookshop makes for bookshop policy in such things as location, price, sales commission, and advertising - key elements in the distribution process.

With regard to location, bookshops tend to be found almost exclusively in the big towns. A few of them have managed to establish branches in smaller towns, usually administrative headquarters. There are hardly any bookshops in the villages owing to poor roads and other transportation problems, especially during the rainy season; bookshops located outside the major cities may not be able to receive adequate quantities of books and cannot, therefore, respond adequately to the demand for textbooks by schools in their catchment area.

Price is a critical element in the book distribution process. Enow (1991, p. 11) estimates the average cost of textbooks per student at the upper levels of the primary school at about 10.000 francs CFA. The figure will be much higher at the general and technical secondary school levels. Given that most parents, on the average, may have about five to six children in school, a family may spend about 50.000 francs per year only on textbooks for its children at the primary level. Because of the high price of books, most parents usually instruct the older children to take great care over their books so that they can be passed on to the younger ones. This strategy tends to hinder book distribution since the demand for a given textbook would continue to drop each year following its publication until that book has been revised. Under these circumstances, authors and publishers who do not revise their books often would suffer a decline in income every year following the first year or two of publication.

Authors who, for some reasons, undertake to print their own books and to handle the sales themselves are usually frustrated by the high sales commission that most bookshops charge. This commission ranges from 25 to 30 percent. In addition to such a high commission, some bookshop managers tend to delay payments to authors far beyond expected dates.

The manipulation of these elements by bookshops to their own advantage and the frustrations that writers often experience in getting their manuscripts accepted by publishers cause authors to strive to be their own publisher. In this respect, they write

manuscripts, hand them in to printers, pay the costs of production, and undertake distribution and advertising. This kind of engagement may keep the writer so occupied with one book that there is hardly any time left to think about writing another. This point may partly explain why Cameroon writers have not been so prolific in textbook writing. In concluding this section of the paper, I would say that the foregoing problems faced by Anglophone Cameroon writers are in many ways responsible for the influence that foreign authors and publishers continue to maintain in the school textbook publishing and distribution process.

IV. Improving the Textbook Writing and Publishing Situation in Cameroon

Having reviewed problems faced by Anglophone Cameroon writers in writing, publishing and distributing their books, the paper will continue by outlining some suggestions which could be applied by authors, publishers and the Government to improve the Anglophone Cameroon textbook publishing effort.

The first suggestion that will be proposed here concerns the national booklist which, as was pointed out earlier, is heavily weighted in favour of foreign authors who, supported by foreign multinational publishers, have a big edge over Cameroon authors in the book selection competition at the central office of the Ministry of National Education. This was particularly noticeable at the secondary school level, where Cameroon authors play a very insignificant role. If book selection for the whole nation continues to be left in the hands of officials in Yaounde, foreign authors, with all the advantages they enjoy, will continue to dominate the textbook scene.

The suggestion to be made in this respect is that MINEDUC central office officials in collaboration with provincial services, selected textbook authors and publishers as well as instructional media experts, should jointly develop criteria for the evaluation and selection of textbooks in each discipline. Once this has been done, textbook selection committees should be constituted each year in the different provinces to select the books to be used for that year. This does not, of course, imply that new authors should be recommended every year. Decentralization of decision-making in textbook selection will, most likely, encourage a healthier competition in book writing and publishing and may, in the long run, lead to lower prices and higher textbook quality.

Secondly, Cameroon authors should be encouraged to work in teams in order to pull their resources, skills and knowledge together. This should be particularly so in the areas of language, mathematics and the sciences, where Cameroon writers have made no impact at the secondary level. One way to foster this team spirit might be for book selection committees to give preference to books that are written by teams or, at least, two authors.

Thirdly, MINEDUC should (in collaboration with universities, research institutes, the technical services of friendly countries and UNESCO) plan and implement annual seminars and workshops, in the different provinces and Yaounde for authors, publishers, and textbook selection committees. Such seminars and workshops should focus on technical issues and problems related to writing, publishing and distribution.

Fourthly, some Cameroon authors and publishers, especially in the mathematics and science areas, may consider entering into negotiation with foreign authors and publishers to acquire subsidiary rights that would allow for such books to be published in Cameroon. This would be similar to what the beer companies in Cameroon have been doing with the production of foreign brands in the country. Once a subsidiary right over a book has been acquired, the Cameroon publisher can, in collaboration with an indigenous author, introduce specific elements that are relevant to schooling realities in Cameroon and at the same time keep those that are universal.

Lastly, I would encourage Anglophone Cameroon authors to join hands with budding Cameroon researchers in universities and research institutes as well as with those indigenous publishers who appear to be demonstrating some seriousness to foster research activities in the various subjects of the Cameroon school curriculum. This could culminate in the formation of research groups and associations, and may lead to the mastery by various authors of the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills that would ensure their versatility and increased self confidence.

Conclusion

Textbooks play a significant role in school learning, enjoying many advantages over other forms of instructional media. Owing to the near absence of other teaching material in a developing country like Cameroon, books constitute the main medium of teacher-student interaction and are sold in millions of copies every year by different authors and publishers. Under these circumstances, it becomes critically important for a country, both on the intellectual and economic planes, to exercise adequate influence upon the textbook production system through its own authors and publishers.

Unfortunately, in Cameroon, textbook supply in schools is still highly dominated by foreign authors and publishers. This paper has shown that at the primary level, though almost all the books used are written by Cameroonians, their publishers are mostly foreign multinational companies. At the secondary level, the situation appears pathetic in that the textbook scene is dominated by foreign authors and publishers. Based on data from the national booklist recommended by the Ministry of National Education for 1992/1993 school year, the books selected for key subjects such as English Language,

Physics, Mathematics and Chemistry in Anglophone Cameroon schools are exclusively those written by foreign authors.

As a result of these findings, some problems that Anglophone Cameroon writers face in the writing, publishing and distribution of textbooks were examined. These problems revolve around: lack of incentives and research facilities; the centralization of school textbook selection authority in the hands of a few officials at the central office of the Ministry of National Education; the excessive lobby apparatus of the multinational publishers in the corridors of that office; poor distribution infrastructure; the high cost of books and its concomitant effects; and bookshop sales and distribution policies. These problems were shown to be contributing factors to the excessive influence that foreign authors and publishers continue to exert on the textbook scene in Cameroon schools.

In the light of the problems that were identified and discussed, certain solutions were suggested. These include: the decentralization of textbook selection authority; the formulation of objective criteria for evaluation of textbooks; formation of textbook writing teams by authors, especially in the science and mathematics areas; the organization of annual workshops and seminars by MINEDUC and other competent agencies for authors and publishers; the acquisition of subsidiary rights to publish foreign textbooks in Cameroon and the formation of research groups and associations.

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III
TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ANGLOPHONE
WRITING



Bernard Nsokika Fonlon (photo: *Abbia* 1979)

The Concept of Anglophone Literature

Alobwed'Epie

1.1.

The title of this discussion does not readily throw light on what it is all about. This may cause one to wander from one expectation to another. To put the title in my perspective, I propose a definition of terms.

Concept: The term concept is derived from Latin *conceptus*, which means, to form in the mind, to imagine, to understand, to form an idea. The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* defines it as "an idea underlying a class of things, a general notion."

Anglophone: The compound word "Anglophone" is not found in the dictionary. It would have been, as such, *sans objet*, if its proper adjective component *Anglo* was not found combining with other components to designate things of English origin, or attitudes towards things of English origin. It can therefore be said that the term Anglophone is a new coinage - coined to designate what the components of the word mean. *Anglo* means English and *phone* means sound. Literally, *Anglophone* means English sound. If it is used to refer to people, it means people who produce English sounds or, better still, people who speak English.

This definition would have been readily accepted if research did not prove the contrary. Of the 250 bilingual Cameroonians questioned whether they are Anglophones or Francophones, all whose first received language was English said they are Anglophone, while all whose first received language was French said they are Francophone. In like manner, the 68 children (whose parents hail from the South-West and North-West provinces) who attend French-speaking primary schools because their parents work in strictly French-speaking areas of the country, all readily identified themselves as Anglophone though French is their first received language. In political circles, the use of the term Anglophone varies considerably depending on the setting, the audience and the mood of the speaker. In Cameroon usage, the term is used to designate the opposite of Francophone on the one hand and, on the other, to designate people native to the S.W. and N.W. Provinces.

Literature: The term literature is derived from the Latin term *litteratura*. Bernard Fonlon (ABBIA 1982: 180) says the term *litteratura* comes from *littera*, which means a written sign representing sound. No doubt, then, that whatever is written that represents the spoken word bears the name "literature". Thus, the writings of a country or period can be referred to as the literature of the country or epoch. But literature as we think of it here, refers to writings whose value is determined by the beauty, the sublimity and essence of form and emotional effect. The O.A.L.D. defines such writings as books valued as works of art - drama, fiction, essay, poetry and biography as contrasted with technical books. To summarise, 'concept' means an idea underlying a class of things. 'Anglophone' means people native to the S.W. and N.W. Provinces and 'Literature' means books valued as works of art.

The concept of Anglophone literature therefore means (in a reversed order) books valued as works of art, by people, about people, for people native to the S.W. and N.W. Provinces of Cameroon. It is a literature with a distinctive geo-historical and linguistic identity, one that parallels a sister literature in a bilingual country and that is sufficiently open-ended to function as a sub-class in the community of literatures.

1.2. Foundations

Within the Cameroon setting, the people and area known as Anglophone have a geo-historical, linguistic and cultural identity that compels any critical observer to segment the country (Cameroon) into three main sub-regions - the grand Moslem Francophone north, the grand Christian Francophone south, and the grand Christian / Moslem Anglophone, or simply, Anglophone.

Geography: The S.W. and N.W. Provinces cover an area of approximately 36,000 sq. km. It is bounded to the west and north by Nigeria, to the east by the grand Francophone Christian south and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It has a population of approximately 2.5 million out of an estimated 12 million.¹

History: Though the area under discussion has remained unchanged geographically since it was carved out of German Kamerun, it has seen an avalanche of historical changes. Between 1884-1914 it was an integral part of German Kamerun. When Germany lost Cameroon in the First World War, the League of Nations split Cameroon into two, giving the western part to Britain and the eastern part to France. The western part, composed of British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons was administered as part of Nigeria between 1916-1960. Through a United Nations plebiscite, the British Northern Cameroons voted to join Nigeria, while the British

1 1989 census

Southern Cameroons (the area under discussion) voted to join French Cameroun that had gained its independence and was known as *La République du Cameroun*. The two factions formed a federation in 1961 and were known respectively as West Cameroon (former British Southern Cameroons) and East Cameroon (former French Cameroun). In 1972, unitary Government was established thus abolishing the geographical divide of the country into West and East. The country became the United Republic of Cameroon. This led to the introduction of the words Anglophone and Francophone to identify the peoples who formed the United Republic. In 1983, by presidential decree the country became known simply as the Republic of Cameroon. This politico-historical development aimed at eliminating all traces of the former divisions. That was, of course, wishful thinking as the division between Anglophone and Francophone remains indelible at the linguistic, cultural and even political arenas.

Linguistic: The linguistic evolution of Cameroon shows that the English Language was the first foreign language that was used (in its pidgin form) during the slave trade epoch, the German colonial epoch and even shortly after Germany lost Cameroon to the allied forces. Francis Mbassi-Manga (CASEF 1976: 54) holds that, though the Germans tried to ban the use of English during their colonial period, it persisted and survived even in French Cameroon after the split. French, however, supplanted it in French Cameroon, though its pidgin form persisted in the coastal region. In the British Southern Cameroons English became the official language.

Culture: The Anglophones evolve around two main cultural trends - indigenous and foreign. Indigenous culture for the Anglophones is the manifestation of rural roots, their preservation through identification with and upholding of ethnic values - inherited artefacts, goods, ideas, habits, technologies, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs, in short, all that has contributed to individual ethnic group survival over the centuries. These, they communicate among themselves and with the outside world through numerous activities: dance, song, drama, and, above all, language. The foreign culture intervenes at the super-ordinate level.

The Anglophone area falls under two macro-cultural segments: the northern segment and the southern segment. Each of these is an amalgamation of micro-cultural segments. Micro-cultural segments exhibit near and distant cultural similarities that make them identifiable with a particular macro-segment.

The two macro-cultural segments, on their part, merge in a super-ordinate cultural group brought about by the uniting force of a foreign culture and language - the English culture and the English Language. This admixture of micro-cultures and macrocultures with the super-ordinate or foreign culture has been made much more complex by the Francophone dimension. The Anglophone has to operate in the Francophone milieu (also characterized by its micro, macro and super-ordinate cultures) as he did in the

Nigerian milieu before 1960. How did the Anglophone area survive in Nigeria when it was only $\frac{1}{16}$ of the size, and about $\frac{1}{50}$ of the population of Nigeria? What were the experiences? How does it survive today in the Cameroon Republic where it occupies only $\frac{1}{8}$ of the surface area and is about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the whole population? Who is he? What do people think of him? What does he think of himself?

These are questions that must be answered by the literature. Is there such a literature? If there is, to what extent? If there isn't, what has to be done?

1.3. The Need for an Anglophone Literature

Chinua Achebe, in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987: 124), writes:

So why do I say the story is chief among his fellows? The same reason I think that our people sometimes will give the name Nkolika to their daughter - Recalling-Is-Great. Why? Because it is only the story can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort ...

In a story, man discovers himself and his society. A group of people that has gone through the historical, political, sociological, cultural and economic odyssey that the Anglophones have gone through cannot be without a story of humiliation and persecution, a story of struggle characterized by failures and successes, a story of its heroes and cowards, a story of its martyrs and redeemers, a story of betrayals and redemptions or a story of individual or group experiences. The people must have a story to tell in prose, verse, drama or song. They must have a story told by themselves, about themselves, for themselves and for the world at large.

The inborn desire to preserve the past in stories, to entertain the present with stories and mould the future through them has been pretty low-keyed amongst the Anglophones. According to Lyonga and Butake (in ABBIA 1982: 123), "Apart from one or two names, the English-speaking Cameroonian has not yet made a lasting impression on literary critics, or the general Cameroon reading public, whereas there is a remarkable study of Cameroon writers of French expression."

This state of affairs calls for a conscious and open appeal to the Anglophone public. There is nobody else who can put in story form Anglophone experiences better than the Anglophone himself. Literature by Anglophones, about Anglophones for Anglophones and the world at large is a necessity. He who farts reveals the state of his bowels, he who talks reveals the state of his mind, but he who does neither of the two is better dead because he mortgages his survival to the forces of destruction.

1.4. Themes

Anglophone literature should be all-embracing. It should explore and appraise the Anglophone in his old and new environments. It should present the Anglophone in motion through his historical, political, economic and sociological evolution. That apart, it should present the permanent values of the Anglophone - the Anglophone as he sees himself. There are ideas which remain unexplored and I would proceed to suggest a few.

The rural past: The rural past is a fertile ground for a conscious and well meaning writer to exploit. We need to preserve in print the beauty (or ugliness) of a past that is threatened by a very fast changing world. Orality is ephemeral and lame in preserving the past. The rich proverbs and idioms, the myths and the folktales when collected and properly analyzed can open up fantastic avenues for the understanding of a lost heritage. But, according to Fonlon, "Often the beauty is there in a thing, but the perceiver may see nothing, because sense and mind and feeling are untutored." Few Anglophones study Folkloristics, few study the ancient history of their people, but most are exposed to the wealth of rituals characterized by worship, dance and song. All these provide openings for the composition of works of art that depict the primordial past.

The rural past in the present: By this I mean, a disturbed rural community, disturbed by an invading civilization - religion, education, government. In other words, a community in which the rustics are gradually or violently being eroded by the invading values. This is the most exploited area and our writers show that it is not a one-way traffic. Jumbam in *The White Man of God* epitomizes the eroding effects of both values (one against the other) in the catechist who acts God and the devil at the same time. The catechist is a caricature of the ambiguous reception of white values by blacks: preach this, but under the cover of a mask, darkness or military might, do something else. Ngongwikuo, in *Taboo Love*, also presents the clash of values. He presents defeat in victory and victory in defeat. Iyafi and Jam, epitomes of modern values, are tried and sentenced to death by the Fon and his councillors (epitomes of old values). Jam is killed in the most savage manner. In his death the old values apparently triumph, but it is victory in defeat because, as the story unfolds, the Fon and his councillors are helpless in the gyrating wheel of change. On the other hand, Iyafi commits suicide rather than live without Jam. Her death is a symbol of the selfdefeating modern values. Suicide, no matter the cause, is selfdefeating. Other writers like Asong in *The Crown of Thorns* echo the clash of values. They tend to say with one voice that the past was not a bed of roses. It has to be replaced. But with what? If modern values lead to suicide, what does the future hold in store for mankind? Look around and get the message, then write in reply. Paint a better world in words.

British Southern Cameroons in Nigeria: When British Cameroons was administered as a part of Nigeria, it was short of educated people and thus relied on manpower from Nigeria and the Gold Coast (Ghana). Nigerians dominated all spheres of life in British Southern Cameroons. They were farmers, petty traders, teachers, administrators; they were everywhere.

Today, Anglophone Cameroonians can look back in anger, or pleasure, and tell us how they felt being second-class citizens in their supposed area of jurisdiction. They can praise or condemn their heroes who, in spite of odds, achieved a quasi government in Buea in 1954, that led subsequently to reunification with French Cameroon. They can look back and recast the humiliations suffered by their womenfolk at the hands of domineering Igbo traders. They can look back comically or tragically on how they became the custodians of beggars' purses.

The British Southern Cameroons: This period spans from 1954 to 1972, and it is divided into the Endeley and the Foncha Governments. It was a period of intense political activity - a period rife in political adventurism, political blunders and betrayals. Today, British Southern Cameroonians can look into and recast in poetry, drama or short-story the factors that laid the foundation stone of the present-day relationship between the peoples of the South-West and North-West Provinces.

The Endeley Government (1954-1959) highlighted coastal supremacy and arrogance. People and things of grassfield origin were considered inferior. Today, the Bamenda female writer may look back tragically or comically on how she was humiliated not only by the coastal people, but even by her educated or rich brothers who abandoned her and got married to the Namondos and the Ntubes of the coast in a bid to get the feel of being a coaster. In 1959, the tables turned. The Foncha Government (1959-72) gave the grassfield man a new consciousness, a new self-discovery and the divine right to own all. That self-discovery led the Bamenda men who had married the Namondos to abandon them and to get re-married to their emancipated grassfield girls with whom they were to beget 100% Bamenda-blood children who were to supplant those of the Namondos for the acquisition of ethnic titles. Today, the Namondos should recount their traumatic experiences.

Cradle of Anglophone: British Southern Cameroons joined French Cameroon in a Federation. As long as the Federation lasted, West Cameroon enjoyed a parliamentary system modelled after the British system. President Ahidjo could not have been happy to have a semi-independent state operating a system of government he did not quite understand. He thus set himself the task "to snuff out all competing sources of autonomy and legitimacy: the demotion of the traditional chiefs, the disruption of personalities and ethnic "machines", the neutralisation of West Cameroon particularism. (Richard Joseph,

ed. 1978: 77). Ahidjo's task was facilitated by personal rivalries among the leaders of West Cameroon who easily fell prey to the establishment of a unitary government.

Today, those who bore witness to the intrigues, the manoeuvres, the treachery, the betrayals, the crimes of greed and selfishness of the epoch can recast in poetry, prose or drama, their experiences. Albert Mukong's *Prisoner Without a Crime* recounts a personal experience. He was not the only victim. Others abound. Prisons were not the only side of the coin. There were 'palaces', too. Those who lived in them owe us their experiences. Those who contributed to the loss of West Cameroon identity should tell us the taste of the broth when one is not eating it.

The Anglophone: As earlier seen, the establishment of a unitary government in Cameroon gave rise to the coinage of the word Anglophone. Those who coined the word did so because of its denotative meaning, that is, English-speaking people. Those who use the word today use it both denotatively and connotatively. Who is an Anglophone to a Francophone? The three most common responses to the question are:

- a man who speaks English (general usage, non-specific)
- a Cameroonian who is not Francophone (specific)
- people from former West Cameroon (specific).

All languages have the word *stranger* or its equivalent. *Stranger* has both denotative (Dictionary meaning) and connotative meanings (meaning that reveals either the positive or negative attitude of the speaker toward the subject). When it is used to mean *guest*, it is denotative. When it is used to mean an intruder, a non-native or a person who does not speak the language of the community, it is connotative because it demarcates the mental set of the referent from that of the community.

There are two types of *stranger* - the inferior and the superior. Once a community identifies a stranger as inferior, they assign to him all the attributes of inferiority - stupidity, drunkenness, poverty, moral decadence and carelessness. African languages have more precise terms to describe inferior stranger, e.g. *nchong* in Bakossi, *Nkwag* in Bamileke, *belobelobo* in Ewondo. It may be this African language substratum that influences the way Francophones use the word Anglophone to refer to people native to the South-West and North-West Provinces.

By contrast, once a community identifies a stranger as *superior*, they assign to him all the attributes of superiority, intelligence, formality, modesty, wealth, uprightness, frankness and carefulness. In most cases, African languages identify a superior stranger by describing his origin.

A stranger may evolve from inferior to superior or vice-versa. Societal attitudes towards the stranger, or his towards the society, may change with time.

The words *Anglophone* and *Francophone* can be very emotive in certain settings in Cameroon because they tend to evoke the meanings *stranger* and *host*. Since *Anglophone* is the underdog that has evolved from British Southern Cameroons to Southern Cameroons to West Cameroon and, now, to Anglophone, he is automatically regarded as an inferior stranger. Anglophones were outnumbered, outeducated, and outfoxed in every arena of life when they were governed as part of Nigeria. They came out of Nigeria limping economically, politically and educationally. When they united with French Cameroon, they were once again outnumbered, outeducated and outfoxed. Yet, none of these overwhelming disadvantages has daunted their resolve to survive as a distinct people.

No doubt, then, that apart from its denotative meaning, the word *Anglophone* is currently being used connotatively to denote inferior stranger and metaphorically to denote superior stranger.

Connotative usage: This is the individual, group or sectional, apparently non-official, usage. It is characterized by a strong negative attitude of the speaker against the referent. Example: I know of a Bamileke woman whose daughter was affianced to a man from the N.W. Province. She objected to the marriage on grounds that the people who drank and behaved badly in her off-licence bar were Anglophones. To her, *Anglophone* meant drunkenness, bad behaviour, extravagance, negligence and carelessness. To force her into accepting the marriage, the couple went ahead and made a baby. In spite of that, she refused. When the child grew up, the girl forced her mother to send the child to an English-speaking school. The child and his shining blue uniform are now known as "Anglophone". The child does not err as a child but as an "Anglophone". In the same vein, people of the S.W. and N.W. Provinces do not err as individuals, they err as "Anglophones". During the last political turbulence in the country, the word "Anglophone" was as good a smear for the gallows as the word terrorist was during the Ahidjo regime.

Metaphorically: This is the positive, emotive usage. This usage is new in that it is devoid of flattery. With the advent of multipartism, the word *Anglophone* has assumed a new dimension. In some circles it is synonymous with Bamenda, Fru Ndi, or SDF. Some Francophones who admired the daring spirit of Ni John Fru Ndi and joined his party were heard saying,

"La democratie, grace aux Anglophones."

"Fru Ndi, c'est un vrais Anglophone, une pierre, un fer."

Here, *Anglophone* parallels Fru Ndi, *pierre*, *fer*. Each of these usages is carried out in interpersonal or group interaction. Each of them creates a situation either of friendship or hostility between the interlocutors. Each creates a story to be told by the individual or the group. The story must be told in prose, verse or song, for the benefit of posterity.

Other themes: As earlier said, Anglophone literature should be all-embracing. Although historical and political themes seem to dominate in this paper, Anglophones are duty-bound to appraise their Helens of Troy and their Maud Gones, the beauty of their landscape, the wealth of their region and all that enhances their undaunting spirit.

Conclusion: It has been said that *Anglophone* means people who speak English and are native to the S.W. and N.W. Provinces. By "native to", I mean people who are either native by ethnicity or native by immigration. This, therefore, integrates the offspring of people of French Cameroon who fled *corvée* between 1922-1926 and immigrated to British Cameroons.

Anglophones should see themselves as a people of varied ethnic languages and cultures but whose individual identities have been made to merge and function in a union of thought moulded by the English language. P. Henle (1972: 1) cites B.L. Whorf as saying that, "a language constitutes a sort of logic, a general frame of reference and so moulds the thought of its habitual users". Anglophones are divided in ethnicity but are united in Englishism. As such they have a common thought. Thought entails perception and perception generates conceptual organization of what is perceived. Uniformity in the organization of experience means uniformity in philosophy and the general outlook on life and its institutions.

Anglophones perceive and express reality and fantasy differently from people using other languages. In the words of Haugen (in ALATIS 1970: 4), "it feels different to talk one language than to talk another. You talk about different things and you talk about things from different points of view." This clearly shows why what is known as *apple* in English is not the same thing as what is known as *pomme* in French. For, beyond the common fruit lies the expression, *the apple of my eye*, which has no equivalence in French. That is why the Anglophone concept of democracy is different from that of other people. The Anglophone knows that in democracy, it is one man one vote and the majority carries the vote. People speaking other languages may know that in democracy, it is one man one vote and the Supreme Court carries the vote.²

Anglophones have never mortgaged their ideas and ideals. They did not, while in Nigeria. They should not, while here. They must know that there is an indissoluble relationship between language and thought, language and culture and language and the total human personality. A people's culture cannot be preserved indefinitely in orality. It has to be preserved in print. Anglophone personality, Anglophone prestige and Anglophone heritage can only be given expression in a literature that is purely Anglophone - a literature that blends the English language with the ethnic languages

2 The author alludes to the controversial result of the October 11, 1992 Presidential elections. The Supreme Court declared Paul Biya winner. [Editors'note]

substrata, thereby giving the language a tint that is uniquely Anglophone. That colour will win for Cameroon the prestigious label *Cameroon English*. We cannot talk of Cameroon English if we are not proud of tailoring the English language to express those intricate realities of our home languages that the Queen's language in its purity cannot express. That tailoring can only be done in our literature.

Anglophones have a challenge to implant their culture in Cameroon and sell it to the outside world. Numbers don't count in this. The Doualas have proven it. Just estimate what fabulous money Makossa fetches per day. It is estimated that Chinua Achebe alone sells more than all the Cameroon authors put together in Cameroon. What does he sell? He sells, of course, Igbo culture. He who buys another person's culture, mortgages his own and is soon swallowed up. The proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* and other novels by Chinua Achebe are more quoted by educated Anglophones than those of their ethnic groups. Okonkwo is given a Cameroonian dimension where an ethnic Anglophone fictional hero would have fitted in well. Should this continue? Francis Dom said *no* to Makossa. No, not to destroy but to enhance. By introducing a purely Bamenda rhythm on the musical scene, he destroys the eroding effects of monotony and so enhances Makossa. Makossa thus has a help sister. Anglophone literature should do same to other literatures.

Today, Anglophones find themselves in a limping democracy. Democracy is the best form of government for the majority, but could be the worst for the minority. Since Anglophones constitute a permanent minority, one of their tools for survival is their literature - a literature that recounts individual and group experiences in this pantomime of being. A literature that would make their progeny gasp and shout, "As it was in the beginning, is now, but never shall be again" in this gyrating wheel of life.

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The Literature of the Hunchback

Buma Kor

If we are talking today about Anglophone writing, it is because we now realise that there exists a whole field of writings in present-day Cameroon which we can identify as "Anglophone", writings by Anglophone Cameroonians treating issues peculiar to Anglophones in Cameroon. This, to me, is a shift, and an important one, from what prevailed in 1977 when the University of Yaounde organised the Colloquium on Cameroon Writers and Critics. At that time there was no distinction made between writings by Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians. I do not think this shift is just to signal the fact that in Cameroon there exists writings by Anglophones and Francophones.

I see the distinction we are making today as the necessary step towards defining and understanding a people's heritage, the Anglo-Saxon heritage, within a bilingual English / French Cameroon Republic. Such a distinction opens a new area of research into our existence as English-speaking peoples and also poses challenges which require the rewriting of history. It appeals to me as an expression of a long-standing refusal of Ahmadou Ahidjo's definition of Cameroon's "national unity" which was, and still is, a unity without identity, a fossil incapable of further development which imposes itself on English-speaking as well as French-speaking Cameroonians without the option to identify their different cultural, linguistic, historical and traditional potentialities to sustain that unity. Thus, the misconception in some French-speaking Cameroonians of "Unity in diversity" in the multi-party era which has given rise to fear of eventual secession.

That is why during the Colloquium on Cameroon Writers and Critics in April 1977, no one could dare to speak of Anglophone writing. The expression used then was "Cameroonian Writings of English expression" which, today, does not mean the same thing.

I also see the distinction we are making today as resurrecting a forgotten debate over an appellation which I coined in 1971 and which was hotly debated during the 1977 colloquium. Since I caused the stir by describing the body of writings of English-speaking Cameroon as the *literature of the hunchback*, I have the opportunity, this time, to explain myself and win the approval of my critics. Not so much to win as to state that there is a literature in Cameroon that we can rightly call "Anglophone" because it has an element

of 'anglophoneness' in it, not just because it is written by English-speaking Cameroonians, but because it appeals or refers to the Anglophone situation.

Since 1977, subtle attempts have been engineered politically to "doctor" the Anglophone situation without much impact at "extracting" its existence. In less than one decade, Cameroon became known variously as "The Federal Republic of Cameroon", "The United Republic of Cameroon" and, now, "The Republic of Cameroon". No one knows today what Cameroon will be called a day after tomorrow, for this whole move shows the design of a faulty and hasty unity that has never been based on a genuine conception of the parties concerned. It appears that the idea has been to wipe out one of the parties in order to constitute a whole which has no segments to show. Like an orange, we are scheming all possibilities to create an outer covering which will not immediately show our interior divergencies. The reactions to counter this dubious scheme are the writings we can now identify as "anglophone".

If we admit this, then, we should admit that when we talk of an "Anglophone Writing", we are referring to any work of art by any Cameroonian with a subject-matter based on what was formerly called West Cameroon. There are issues which spring out of our experience of attempted annihilation, or assimilation, which are unparalleled. Anglophone writing falls within three distinct periods which can be classified as follows:

1. **The Pre-independence-period** which we may see as spanning from 1945 - 1960, is a period which has its historical parallel in the current period as far as "lording it over us" is concerned; then, we were dominated by Nigerians as Yorubas and Igbos held senior posts in the colonial administration, while the Igbos monopolised the business sector.

Given the experience of a young boy growing up in Victoria and with the facts of history staring me in the face, I am led today to believe that we of English-speaking extraction never fully experienced the implicit impact of white-man rule, since Southern Cameroons was ruled as a Protectorate from Lagos. Even though there was a British Governor-General and a few British administrators, we were not subjected to the severe treatment of colonial masters as was the case in Nigeria or East Africa, Southern Africa or even in French Cameroons (with the exception of the plantations). We had a special colonial experience which left us without terrible scars and wounds as compared to other peoples of Africa. That is why we are of such high moral integrity and sense of purpose that struck our compatriots when we joined *La République du Cameroun*.

But this disciplined behaviour made us unaggressive, even docile, to be "lorded over" all the time. If we have learnt anything since reunification, it is aggression, it is "Kalé Kalé", it is how not to shrink when your rights are violated. And we should not be blamed today for making use of the lessons we have painstakingly learnt.

Even though this period gave us an edge over other peoples of Africa, it had drastic consequences on our literary creativity. We were like what is known today in this country as the "eleventh province". We were neither-nor. So we never got our own cake. In this capacity, we never benefitted from the various Commonwealth literary competitions in schools which brought many of the writers in Nigeria into prominence. Many of our bright students only made it on their own with just a little help from the missionaries. The same situation is still prevalent to this day.

Our pre-independence writings, therefore, will easily be said to be non-existent even though some Southern Cameroonians, while in Nigeria, made significant literary contributions in magazines and newspapers. Bernard Fonlon, Sankie Maimo, Motombi Wolete, S.A. George, Dan Lantum, and a few others are memorable examples. In the "homeland" itself, we do not notice much literary activity. Although, with the establishment of the first radio station in Buea, in 1958, a radio recording of the play, "Adama, Princess of the Niger" was broadcast. This play was performed at the Basel Mission School, Victoria, by a Nigerian travelling theatre.

2. From Independence to "New Deal". The next period runs from 1960 - 1982, when the first Republic under Ahmadou Ahidjo gave way to the New Deal government of Paul Biya. This is the period in which emerged typical Anglophone writing with the consciousness and terms of reference we connote today as "anglophone". It is the sum total of the writing of this period that I have termed the *literature of the hunchback*, which is the main focus in this paper.

3. The Period of the New Dispensation. With the enthronement of Paul Biya in 1982, the plight of the English-speaking Cameroonians became more pronounced. In some respect, as we have seen during the pre-independence period, history is repeating itself. This time, instead of being under the yoke of Nigerians, we are suffocating under the depressing weight of our domineering Francophone "brothers".

Is the world not seeing or are we not crying loud enough? How many ears must a man have before he can hear the cry, the anguish, of a people? How much noise must a people make before the world can know that our people are suffocating? We are today drawing attention to this fact that Anglophone Cameroonians need liberation, they need to be given the right to self-determination. If, on our own, we voted to be part of *La République du Cameroun*, then it is only logical that we should be given the first available ticket to determine our sovereignty. Anything short of this is genocide and a blatant abrogation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Having classified the period of the historical development of our literature, I will now attempt an explanation of what I have called the *literature of the hunchback*. In this

paper, I am concerned only with unpublished, emerging writers whose works show promise, some of which were reviewed in the Radio Buea programme, Young Writers' Forum. Remember, I am concerned with the period between 1960 and 1982.

Two young poets living in Victoria (now Limbe) in 1970 saw what today we are grappling with as the "Anglophone problem". These young poets were Eugene Agubor and Buma Kor. To Agubor, this period signified a "rising nation", the beginning of a new tradition and the end of "days of darkness". Agubor tells us that:

One lonesome evening so,
I thought I saw and did admit,
Far beyond the misty skyline
A mighty nation coming to light
Which, before was shaded
Against its will and might.

It looked so lovely and exotic
For my mortal eyes to behold,
In truth and words it seems to say
That days of darkness are gone to stay,
But the well-being is what remains
For this mighty nation coming to light.

In fact, for a long time now, our 'anglophoneness' has been "shaded against its will" and today gives us the singular opportunity to take off the mist from people's eyes, to examine if, in fact, "days of darkness are gone to stay".

Agubor's poem fits our investigation of Anglophone writing today in Cameroon. It gives us the idea that our creative writing is not lost or dead, that it exists and really, it does exist, though "shaded against its will".

It's chiefs and nobles too
May have struggled all so long
For the merging of this nation
From its long and worthless slumber,
For such made its name hidden
Though now it's self revealing.

As for Buma Kor, his aim was to draw attention to, to resist "an encroaching new culture" whose bilingualism made demands on him. In "Silhouette", he enquires:

Who will take the case for the twin hills?
Who will re-create the created bliss?
Have these hills real sons and daughters?
Who will re-build the nation's statecraft?

Our problems today were identified by our poets long ago but they were not given the benefit of a proper hearing.

What should interest us today is how distinct our literature is, what singles out our writing from other Cameroonian or African writings? What is very particular about Anglophone writings from Cameroon? I ask these questions because I find that African literature has become so generalized today that people seem to take anything from anywhere in Africa to be African literature without distinction. My task is to make a distinction because the expression "African Literature" is becoming vague. It is not the writer but the writings which determine what has now come to be looked at from shop windows as a priceless commodity.

And this is a danger because, being priceless, African Literature is up for auction. Each new bidder leads one to further difficulties in understanding the embodiments of the literature of Africa. The way to know all about the literature of Africa is to know the different writings from different parts of Africa, the distinctive characteristics embodied in all writings from country to country or region to region. It is not grouping them together, but singling them out, analysing the different themes, problems, styles, messages. If we break down the term African Literature, we shall have representative writings of a specific area or of specific types of writers, for instance, the writings of Anglophones of a certain period in Cameroon which I call the *literature of the hunchback* or the Onitsha Market Literature from Nigeria. In other words, if this wide and often misleading term "African Literature" is broken into little bits, the term will cease to exist: it will exist only in as much as we know Latin to be today.

The *literature of the hunchback*, therefore, is a specialty of Anglophones or other Cameroonians who have the experience. I have taken the works of some of the unpublished poets to further demonstrate what I mean. The first poem, "Life is a Journey", is by P.L. Weledji.

Katapap, katapap, katapap, and coy, coy, coy!
Tututu, tututu, tututu and voo, voo, voo !
Worsh, worsh, worsh we're all on our way,
Life is but a journey, a journey round a circle.

Somewhere on the circle your start must be,
It doesn't really matter the way you've got to start,
Some are born to trot it all, all by themselves,
Others have to walk and ride, some must limp. Few,
Of course, will have to fly, others still to crawl.

Born by night or day, you are on your start,
If you have to creep, creep at an edge;
He who has to mount, needs more road than you.
Once you mount your horse, keep on your side,

He who has to drive needs more road than you;
And the train on the crossing will have to halt the car.

After two more stanzas, it ends with:

Though a journey-life may be, there are checks as well,
And while we toil and go, we sing songs of joy,
For up, down and up again, moves the normal line,
Katapap, katapap, katapap; coy, coy, coy!
And voo, voo, voo, we from the journey's beat.

Can we say that the "songs of joy" he sings while on his journey are really songs of joy?
The next poem, "Grief", is by Nyansako-ni-Nku. It is different in form and in style, but
the underlying theme is the other side of the same feelings expressed in Weledji's poem.

By the evening fire
Sat I in deep meditation,
Thinking of things with
The son of my brother.

Tell me something, Uncle,
Tell me about the village
Our Chief,
Our councillors,
The village,
Its future ...

Oh! Son of my brother,
Ask another question
What future is there
For our village?
How can a soulless man
Be our chief?
How can cheats
Be our councillors?
How can liars
Be our citizens?
How could we be made
To live with soulless men?
What future is there
For this village?
You increase my grief,
Son of my brother.
Ask another question.

And Kitts Mbeboh, in the poem "The song of the village elder", echoes the same feeling:
two palm trees towered high
in the wind

once they frowned
and pulled and pulled
till one came crashing
into the valley
the one that remained
breathed the air
but had to fight the wind
alone.

These poems reveal the general feelings expressed in the works of most of the unpublished Anglophone writers whom I had the privilege to read and review in Young Writers' Forum in 1971 and which are also prevalent in the published works.

But why the hunchback?

The picture one gets from looking at the map of Cameroon is a bulging portion from the main frame. If this map of Cameroon were to be a person with a hunchback, which part of the map would you identify as the hunchback? In this hunchback lie our illness, our problem, our burden as writers. In fact, it is the riddle of Cameroon. A man who carries a hunchback has no choice but to carry it because it is a part of him. This is the main problem facing our country today. It is a challenge. We either incise the hunchback or accept to carry it.

France is sometimes called the "Hexagon" and New York State "the Great Apple". What would you call Anglophone Cameroon?

The literature of the hunchback, apart from being the sum total of all our writings about our physical conditions - our weaknesses, our pride and fall, our opportunities and disgruntleness, our traditional life in marriage or, in conflict, with all that is Francophone seen within a particular period, is a literature of riddles: we talk of our problems as if they were the problems of other people. We are silent. We bear it within ourselves. Like the hunchback, we conceal so much within our writing, contending we can do nothing about our predicament. A kind of docility which characterises our superior sense of well-being. This is not an escape. This is not an absurdity. It is something profound. This kind of writing poses great challenges in the bed of its creation. This is why most of the budding Anglophone writers of the 70's wrote with a heavy load upon their shoulders, giving birth to the giant riddle which is significant in their works. This is the specificity of our writing which singles it out from the bulk of other works by Africans.

Most of the writings by unpublished Anglophone writers I was chanced to read and review in 1971 have this riddle hidden in their works which they themselves do not want to explain. They expect the reader to find out this riddle. This riddle is found in different images: in rain, in mountains which cannot be climbed, in rivers which cannot be crossed, in waves, in the sultry talks of village elders, and so on. Let me briefly illustrate this again

with the following poems and a short story. Can we find this riddle in the poem of Carlson Anyangwe describing the incessant rainfall in Buea in the month of July?

All trees seem to be weeping,
And plants seem to be drooping,
There is not a single bird in the air,
The streets are virtually deserted,
Drenched and weeping sign-boards shiver in the cold,
Miniature waterfalls cascade down roofs.

Everything seems to be unhappy,
It all looks as though nature herself is
In mourning. I, too, I feel unhappy
And irritated under this Buea rain.

And Ernest Alima has his own riddle he expects us to discover. The poet lived and wrote in Buea. Can we find this riddle in his poem entitled "If you must Die?"

In life,
If you must die
For the cause of justice,
If you must die
So that others live,
A saprophytic life
On your dead body,
If you must die
For the well-being of mankind,
Die
With a will,
Die.

For it is a triumph
To quit this life
Head first
With feet following
For a good and noble cause.

In another poem entitled "In the Beginning", Alima poses a riddle again for our discovery. He has put it in music so that we can sing and forget our plight.

Since then
Since
Man expresses
The seasons of his soul
Through music
He laughs in music
He cries in music
He loves in music

He sleeps in music
He works in music
He walks in music
And all his life
Goes on like that
And vanishes in music.

Today, we are able to discover what the riddle in Anglophone writing of the 60's and 70's was. If you have not discovered this yet, listen:

Old oracles have gone
Because new gods have come,
But I am still superstitious since I know
That old oracles say things
The new gods do not know.

The poet is Emmanuel Njoya in the poem "Old Oracles and New Gods". There is the riddle, something superstitious, something one must find out in this poem. The old goes, the new comes, but the new cannot fittingly take the place of the old.

Old gods have gone
Because new oracles have come,
But we the old men have old oracles
While our sons hold the new gods;
So when they write life's tests ahead,
Our people will know the stronger
Between old oracles and new gods.

In another poem entitled "The Confession of a Man," Njoya tells us that

The tongue cannot move anymore
Because the heart has hidden
Some of the worthy confessions
A man must make.

"The heart has hidden ... worthy confessions". This is the riddle underlying most of the writings of unpublished Anglophone writers. I may be wrong to say that it is a riddle. It is our peculiarity. It is something intentional.

In "A heart's harvest", a short story by Adolf Dipoko, we get something of an answer to this kind of writing. The story is set in Missaka, one of the C.D.C. plantations in Tiko, and the hero is Ekoka who has several wives, the most senior being Dipita. The time of the story is the end of British rule in Cameroon and Ekoka says he will not die until he has gone to Buea, the headquarters, to see for himself how the British flag is being put down once and for all. He goes to Buea and sees everything but, returning to Missaka, he brings home a heavy heart which causes all his wives to be worried. Only his most senior wife is able to discern that something is wrong since she has never before seen her husband in such depression. In answer to her question, Ekoka tells his wife:

My dear wife, you have spoken the truth. Our people say: he who runs away from death never gets tired. And because all lizards move on their bellies, no one can tell which of the lizards have belly ache.

What we find is that these writers hold back many details when they write. This might be for fear or shame, obviously having something to do with the terrifying looks of Ahidjo's gendarmes parading our streets. Yet, these are the ingredients of which the *literature of the hunchback* is made.

Time flies so fast. Should we not now begin to carve our names on the literary map of the world and carve the *literature of the hunchback* as a distinct type of writing coming out of Anglophone Cameroon?

Time, indeed, appears fast at one time,
And though the clock may steadily tick,
Time may be slow and time may be fast.

Time appears fast when we are slow,
And time is slow when we are fast
Which tells us that
Faulty thoughts like faulty clocks need adjustments.

Time! Time! Time!
Time of deed and death;
Time of action and time of record;
Time to set the clock.

Through Weledji's poem we are today putting on record and setting the time for a new perspective in literature and education in this country. That the Anglophone writing and writers we will be discussing during this workshop be given wider publicity to encourage them further. That, if this workshop will do anything for the Anglophone writer, it will be to see to it that their works are introduced to all Cameroonians both in school and outside.

I will seize this opportunity to make a comment about Richard Bjornson's monumental work on Cameroon writing and the national experience of the title: *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience*. It has been described variously as "pathbreaking", a "pioneering effort" and a "remarkable work".

There is no doubt that this is a landmark, a monumental reference book for many readers of Cameroon writing and writers, but I so much regret the fact that the Anglophone literary endeavour has been lightly documented. Of the mammoth 507 pages of the book, less than 50 pages refer to the English-speaking literary heritage, as if we were just an appendage. It has institutionalized the fact that literature in Cameroon is mainly by Francophone writers. This is not true. We have the arduous task to correct this

misconception by painstakingly writing a similar book which will portray the right balance which Anglophone writing, too, has contributed to our national experience.

Two very important corrections have to be made in Bjornson's book. In chapter 3, "Anticolonialism and Revolution", Bjornson writes that "Foncha made an informal trip to Eastern Cameroon and met Soppo Priso, who provided him with the financial backing to establish the first Anglophone newspaper in the British trust territory, *The Cameroon Times*" (p. 69).

Mr. Nchami, first editor of *Cameroon Times*, were he alive, could have testified as to where the money came from to establish the Cameroon Printing and Publishing Corporation that owned the *Cameroon Times*. What I know is that the KNDP party established the Corporation and the newspaper to propagate its ideologies. It was funded by the party. Wherever they got the money from I don't know. But it is simply not true that Soppo Priso provided the entire funding.

Secondly, it is not true that the first newspaper in British Cameroons was the *Cameroon Times*. No. The first newspaper to be established in Southern Cameroons was the *Cameroon Champion*. It was begun by Motombi Wolete, who was its publisher and editor. This was in 1959, at the heart of discussions for reunification with French Cameroun or joining the Federation of Nigeria. The *Cameroon Champion* was pro-CPNC led by Dr. E.M.L Endeley, advocating joining the Federation of Nigeria. Since the views of the CPNC were strongly expressed in *Cameroon Champion*, the publicised opinion on joining Nigeria was strongly advocated therein. I remember the column "*Spitfire spitting out pepper*" dealt a serious blow to the cause of reunification.

Before this time, the only available newspaper in British Cameroons was the *Daily Times* from Nigeria. It was fairly frequent and the only avenue for carrying KNDP as well as CPNC positions. But this was found insufficient as Nigerian news dominated the paper. Immediately following the establishment of the *Cameroon Champion* in 1959, one saw the birth in 1960 of the *Cameroon Times*. But *Cameroon Champion* did not live long to see the course its struggle was to take when Motombi Wolete died mysteriously at the Albert Nursing Home Hospital, Victoria, which is now Park Hotel Miramar. I remember we were watching a film in Rex Cinema, New Town, Victoria, when the news fell and the film was interrupted. The following morning the newspaper headline, "Stop Press: Motombi Wolete is dead", hit the newsstands.

Now, with the absence of a formidable balance of opinion, Tataw Obenson quit Radio Cameroon in Yaounde to start *Cameroon Outlook* in order to satirise the coming into being of the new state, the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Ako-Aya's incisive portrayal of the Anglophone in the Federation is indelible.

Another correction aims mainly to put the records straight because the information given in chapter 8, "In Search of a Popular Idiom", concerning literary activity in Anglophone Cameroon has been badly mixed up. Bjornson writes:

In Anglophone Cameroon, there was little organised activity until 1970 when Buma Kor, the Irish man Michael Kelly, and several others created the Drama and Speech Performers' Society in Victoria. At the same time Sona Elonge organised a writers' and artists' workshop that met twice monthly to discuss manuscripts submitted by its members. As the director of English language programming for the government's radio station in the area, Paul Kode wrote and produced over thirty half-hour radio dramas in English. He also supported the creation of "Young Writers' Forum" a popular local programme in which Buma Kor and later Awah Dzenyagha introduced the works of aspiring writers. (p. 152)

Indeed, the Drama and Speech Performers' Society was created in Victoria in 1970 as an attempt to break the monotony of the only available entertainment which was cinema. In the Victoria of the 70's, there were two cinema halls, Rex in New Town, the oldest cinema hall in Anglophone Cameroon, and Rio Cinema at Gardens, Victoria, near the Centenary Stadium. They were popularly attended, especially with the showing of Indian films portraying magicians and "funny man".

I was in Victoria, then, having completed secondary school and working with the Presbyterian Treasury Department and a member of the Presbyterian Youth Centre where the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF) met for youth meetings. The warden of the Youth Centre, Mr. Primo Bursik, a German fraternal worker with the Presbyterian Church, wanted more groups to be formed to attract more young people to the Youth Centre. That's how I came about creating the Drama and Speech Performers' Society as an activity of the Presbyterian Youth Centre, Victoria. I was entirely responsible for its creation and our memorable performances included a debate: "Studies in Europe by Africans should be Discouraged" and the successful first performance in Anglophone Cameroon of *Sov-Mbang: The Soothsayer* by Sankie Maimo.

The Irish man, Michael Kelly, came into our literary scene in 1971 when I suggested to Mr. Emmanuel Moudji, then chief of Station for Radio Buea, to produce the programme "Young Writers' Forum" as an aspect of the work of the Delegate of the National Association of Cameroon Poets and Writers (A.P.E.C.) for the North-West and South-West Provinces. I was a friend to Mr. Kelly who was interested in my poetry and wanted to help me and who was the English Language Teaching Adviser for the West Cameroon government sent by the British Council. I then invited him to run the programme with me. That's how Michael Kelly got mentioned in our literary activities of the 70's.

The Writers' and Artists' Workshops which met twice monthly at the Baptist Teachers Training Centre, BTTC, Soppo, Buea, were not organised by Sona Elonge. I got to know Sona Elonge more closely as a result of the production of Young Writers' Forum. He

was then the Principal of the truly Bilingual Secondary School in Buea after it had been moved from Man-O-War Bay, Victoria.

After Young Writers' Forum was begun, I had to travel the length and breadth of West Cameroon looking for writers. That's how I came to know Mr. Sona Elongé who was very supportive of Young Writers' Forum. In fact, the Writers' and Artists' Workshop developed as a result of a meeting I called with the support of Mrs. Gwen Burnley and Dr. A.D. Mengot, who was the Education Officer for West Cameroon, a post we call today "Delegate of Education". It was at this meeting that the decision was taken to start the Writers' and Artists' Workshop, partly as a forum for writers and artists and partly in preparation for the first exhibition of Anglophone writing in 1973 during the first Agricultural Show which was inaugurated by President Ahmadou Ahidjo.

Poems quoted:

IN THE BEGINNING

By Ernest Alima

In the beginning
The world was melancholy
For without music
And God created the word
And offered it
In love
To man

And man
Took the word
And set it to music

Since then
Since
Man expresses
The seasons of his soul
Through music

He laughs in music
And cries in music
He loves in music
And sleeps in music
He works in music
And walks in music
And all his life
Goes on like that
And vanishes in music.

RISING NATION

By Eugene N. Agubor

One lonesome evening so
I thought I saw and did admit
Far beyond the misty skyline
A mighty nation coming to light
Which beforehand was shaded
Against its will and might

It looked so lovely and exotic
For my mortal eyes to behold
In truth and words it seems to say
That days of darkness are gone to stay
But the well-being is what remains
For this mighty nation coming to light

Its chiefs and nobles too
may have struggled all so long
For the merging of this nation
From its long and worthless slumber
For such made its name so hidden
Though now its self revealing

It has its stories, worries too
In strong and haunting verses
It has its songs, songs of love
Songs of sorrow, strife and toil
And its history is so romantic
For this nation coming to light.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

By P.L. Weledji

Katapap, Katapap, Katapap, and coy, coy, coy!
Tututu, tututu, tututu, and voo, voo, voo!
Worsh, worsh, worsh, we're all on our way.
Life is but a journey, a journey round a circle.

Somewhere on the circle your start must be
It doesn't really matter the way you've got to start;
Some are born to trot it all, all by themselves,
Others have to walk and ride, some must limp. Few,
Of course, will have to fly, others still to crawl.

That we're on a journey is all clear to us.
How you have to do it, is left to yourself;
But what will keep you going is joy in your mind.
Ride, drive or fly; crawl, trot or limp,
Life is sport; life is toil to Tom, Jack and Dick.

Born by night or day, you are on your start.
If you have to creep, creep at an edge;
He who has to mount needs more road than you.
Once you mount your horse, keep on your side,
He who has to drive needs more road than you;
And the train on the crossing will have to halt the car.

If you have to fly, think of other flights,
And while on your way think of mountain heights;
Ride, drive or fly, crawl, trot or limp,
Keep the traffic rules

"Go along with caution, others on the road".
And with these rules in mind, much is safe and fair.

The journey's end is sure, we do not have to hurry.
Walk, crawl or trot, the end you have to reach;
Drive, mount or fly, you have the time to save -
Ride, sail or fly, walk, crawl or limp,
The end is one to all, and all will reach the end.

Though a journey life may be, there are checks as well.
And while we toil and go, we sing songs of joy;
For up, down and up again, moves the normal line,
Katapap, katapap, katapap. Coy, coy, coy!
And voo, voo, voo, we inform the journey's beat.

THE APPARENT FLOW OF TIME

By P.L. Weledji

The clock by tick tock is constant;
And every hour is like the other;
Yet now and again we complain;
"Time is fast, Time is slow".

Time indeed appears fast at one time;
And though the clock may steadily tick;
Time may be slow, and Time may be fast;
And so the complaint.

Time appears fast when we are slow;
And time is slow when we are fast;
Time is slow with all unpleasantness;
While time may be fast to the lark and the busy bee.

Time may be unknown when all is well and good;
And our tears and fears no more ;
But time, we must cry;
When sufferance and ills we want to end.

Time is known to prisoners all;
And better still to examination candidates;
Time by occasion is known to many;
Time always we can tell in time of struggle.

But time always we forget in prosperity and pleasure;
And time we must know in illness and pains;
Time is forgotten when lovers meet;
And the drunks watch dead flies in the cups assembled

Time is constant with genuine thoughts,
Time is hard and sad when intrigues we cultivate
But time is truth and we all know;
That faulty thoughts like faulty clocks need adjustment

Time! Time! Time!
Time is history, "Time will tell";
Time of deed and death, Time of judgement still;
Time of action and time of record;
Time to set the clock.

RAIN

By Carlson Anyangwe

It is certainly very unpleasant
To be caught under Buea's incessant
Rain.

Between the months of June and September
With virtually no stop, it is ever
Rain.

From morn till evening it is raining
Raining, raining, raining, raining, raining.

Dark clouds rush to invade the gloomy sky
Lightening, in the twinkle of an eye
Then the shouts of all the sons of heaven
The wind begins to blow and it starts to
Rain, the notorious tropical rain.

I open my umbrella to cover
But it is useless: rain comes in all
Directions, wetting me through all over
I feel cold, it is uncomfortable.

All trees seem to be weeping
And plants seem to be drooping
There is not a single bird in the air
And the streets are all virtually deserted,
Drenched and weeping sign-boards shiver in the cold,
Miniature waterfalls cascade down roofs.

Everything seems to be unhappy
It all looks as though nature herself is
In mourning. I, too, I feel unhappy
And irritated under this Buea rain.

A few cars run past, splashing the running
Water on me as I hurry down the street.
I curse. All doors are shut. The people are
Besieged in their own homes: the rain attacks
Giving a feeling of claustrophobia.

Cold, my house admits me with a sad mien
My clothes shall not get dry for many days
It is the rainy season and in Buea
For hours on end, it will rain, rain, rain, rain, rain.

Anglophone Cameroon Literature: Is there any such thing?

Emmanuel Fru Doh

While some Cameroon scholars use the appellation Anglophone Cameroon Literature, others wonder if, indeed, there is any such thing. I, like many others, have had to ask myself over and over again if one can genuinely talk of an Anglophone Cameroon Literature per se. My concern in this paper is to investigate the existence of any such phenomenon and bring out its characteristics.

Cameroon on the map of the continent is a small irregular triangle perching on the left, slightly across from Africa's heart with part of her foundation buried in the Atlantic ocean. As a nation, Cameroon is a political, religious, cultural, and linguistic melting-pot. It is, for example, the only country on the continent with exo-glossic bilingualism: English and French, regrettably, are the official languages - if not in practice, at least, in theory. Herein lies the albatross around this nation's neck.

A brief excursion into Cameroon's history will throw light on the politico-cultural problems. Cameroon, before the First World War, was German Kamerun. This state of affairs continued until the administering of this territory was handed over to Britain and France by the League of Nations after the defeat of Germany in the First World War. France immediately went on to prepare its part of the territory to assimilate French culture.¹ Although our compatriots across the Mungo suffered many indignities such as the expropriation of their land, forced labour, the *indégenat*, as a result of French presence, the bitter truth is that they were more exposed to certain facilities such as schools and a publishing house (in spite of the fact that material to be published had to be checked against anti-colonialist sentiments) which their Anglophone counterparts did not have. The result of the French assimilationist policy in Cameroon was that

Cameroonian students living in France during the 1950s produced the territory's first major outburst of literary publication ... the unifying strand that runs through their work is an opposition to colonialism (Bjornson, 54).

The British, by contrast, never intended that black people from the colonies should fully assimilate their culture. Besides, since the British mistakenly considered Southern Cameroons to be of no economic consequence, they administered the territory from Lagos as an arm of Nigeria. The result was that Southern Cameroonians were left to

1 I am not saying this was correct but only trying to bring out the varying degrees of interest displayed by these colonial masters in their mandated territories.

wallow in neglect as literacy rates, to cite but one example, remained low for quite a while before the missionary initiative. In 1939 the Roman Catholics founded St. Joseph's College, Sasse, for boys. This was followed in 1948 by a similar initiative from the Basel Missionaries who founded Bali college in the Bamenda region. In 1957 the Roman Catholics again opened Queen of the Rosary Secondary School in Okoyong for girls. At this point in their history, Southern Cameroonians did not belong to a nation as such but nursed diverse hopes for their future: union with Nigeria or re-unification with Cameroun across the Mungo. The plebiscite of February 11, 1961 saw Southern Cameroons re-uniting with *La République du Cameroun*.

It is common knowledge that a writer's fountain of inspiration is a given context with which he is best acquainted. Southern Cameroonians had a geographical context which was yet to be socially, politically and historically defined. Accordingly, it cannot be claimed they knew their context well since they did not belong. It was, therefore, very difficult to write, yet they did, even though their efforts were sometimes toddling. During all this period, traditional oral literature was (and has always been), part and parcel of the creative art of the people of Southern Cameroons.

It will be wrong to sound as if all was gloomy for the Southern Cameroonian during this mandate period; Southern Cameroonians had at least learned to run a system in which there was order, a system in which there was respect for fellow citizens and government owned institutions. They had learned to be alert and to be able to divorce work from play.

Anglophone Cameroon Literature is, therefore, an embodiment of this people's historical, social and political metamorphosis. In this light, one might say that what this literature is experiencing today - the identity crisis - is not unique, for African Literature as a whole, had to go through this phase before it was "recognised" as authentic and worthy of serious study like the other literatures of the world.

It is by now obvious that although the Francophones and Anglophones of this nation live side by side, with far-fetched national policies of integration, the plight of the Anglophone Cameroonian is peculiar to his group. Together with his Francophone counterpart they bore the brunt of colonialism; side by side they fought for and won their independence, or something like it, where at least black faces now appear to be in command. Today, however, the fate of the Anglophone Cameroonian is hardly different from that of Africans when the so-called colonial masters were openly in control. Because of his minority status, the Anglophone is a second-class citizen who is watched, always suspected. He is one on whom strange policies and superficial gibberish which preach the "national good", but are indeed meant to alienate him from his heritage, are imposed. And this trend *cannot* be tolerated, for it is tantamount to a most vicious attack, albeit subtle, on the integrity, the dignity and pride of the Anglophones as a people. The

Anglophone Cameroonian, earlier colonized by the white man, is once again a victim of "colonization" but, this time, his colonizer is his former partner with whom he served, and were together tormented and exploited by the colonialists. The Anglophone is being given the impression that he is at home but he has to toil very hard to survive. The Anglophone sees himself today in a social, political, and cultural marriage in which the couple is incompatible, for the idea of marriage as a give and take does not apply to this "home". It is a home in which there is the intentional destruction of a once beautifully structured Anglophone social system, for it was with the rambling integrationist ideologies which the "unitary" state gave birth to that the first cracks became evident. A once intact Anglophone social, political, and cultural bastion is today in ruins. This is the world in which the Anglophone writer today finds himself. It is mainly against the consequences of this black second cousin of colonialism - horizontal colonialism - that genuine Anglophone Cameroon authors, literate and non-literate alike, are struggling. They, therefore, want either to be considered equal citizens with their Francophone compatriots in the Cameroon nation or, in the extreme, to be left alone.

Like Ephraim N. Ngwafor, in *May Former Victoria Smile Again*, who laments the busting of projects like the Yoke dam and Powercam, the C.D.C. oil Mill at Bota, the Cameroon Air Transport at Middle Farms, Victoria, and the Victoria Wharf which gave the Anglophones their independence and strength as a people - the Anglophone writer laments the nonchalance of politicians towards whatever is Anglophone; he laments the fact that even the best ideas are neglected just because they originated from the minority. The debauched nature of the society today in comparison with the Anglophone set-up is, in the main, the purpose of the writer's attack.

In *Obasinjom Warrior With Poems After Detention*, Bate Besong is not only a bitter poet but a fierce warrior who is out to fight the ills of this nation, Africa, and mankind as a whole. The unpatriotic atmosphere beclouding the events of Lake Nyos are captured by Besong in "The Kaiser Lied". In like manner, his disgust at the unpatriotic spoliation of the nation's wealth by those in authority is revealed in "Letter to Mongo Beti" (17):

Ah Mongo Beti! the opportunistic & kleptocratic
character of this supreme
cranks brigand
barons, bastardized
buccaneers

as analogue
of Ali Baba and the forty hoodlums
...

only yesterday away

to pay homage to his Swiss
Killimanjaro bank loot
... (17).

Bate Besong's *Beasts Of No Nation* is the ultimate condemnation of a society typefied by debauchery. In *Beasts of No Nation*, the "anglos"² of Ednouay are presented as nightsoil men in charge of the city's fetid trash, the evacuation of which is their livelihood; their voices, as they cry for freedom, echo those of Anglophone-Cameroonians. Besong's play is an anthology of Cameroonian unpatriotism and diabolic selfish machinations of those in control and Besong thinks it is the case because one man is the law and the rest a helpless lot of fawning citizens. *Beasts of No Nation* becomes more devastating as soon as it is realised that Ednouay is an anagram of Yaounde, the capital city of the Republic of Cameroon.

Bole Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* is a euphemistic political comment in that, unlike Besong who makes it obvious that Cameroon is the world of his characters, Butake uses a village setting to convey his message. What Butake is against is obvious: the culture of drunkenness, the quest for ephemeral values, and the pointless eulogizing of the village's first servant - the Fon. As in Cameroon where people have to apply for decorations instead of being recommended by their services, in the Fondom of Ewawa citizens now have to apply and beg with gifts for the highly coveted red feather. Butake's prophetic message is obvious: when a society degenerates to this level where obvious principles are being shamelessly violated, then there is bound to be a catastrophe sooner or later.

Francis B. Nyamnjoh's *Mind Searching* is, on its part, a bewildering exposition of how trite are leaders and the system they mismanage. Their concern, as revealed by Nyamnjoh, is not to serve the nation but to see how they can maintain themselves in power at all costs, even if it means visiting the marabouts in Briqueterie come every cabinet reshuffle. Their love for power is seen even in church where accompanied by their thugs, they occupy "high" seats close to the altar. The total collapse of the society is best revealed by Nyamnjoh's protagonist when he fears that his 5.000 francs gift from the Honourable V.M. might have been stolen by a gendarme officer who is, in fact, supposed to protect citizens from such misdemeanours. Nyamnjoh leaves almost nothing out: he jibes at the university institution with its unique ability to frustrate all who meddle with it, laughs at the recruitment norms of our society by which mediocrity brings more financial reward insofar as those concerned passed through one of the so-called "Ecoles des Formations" (118), he ridicules the idea of bilingualism when all important news from the press is broadcast only in French. Not even the church is spared by

2 "Anglo" is a derogatory term of reference for the Anglophone Cameroonian just as "frog" is for the Francophone.

Nyamnjoh's vitriolic insinuations. Nyamnjoh, like Besong, longs for the good old West Cameroon days. His main character says of the driver who transports them to the Honourable V.M.'s house:

He claims that among all the things he was forced to abandon of his former English way of life, only the abandonment of the driving system was worth the pains. All the others were worthy of being emulated by his French speaking [sic!] counterparts ...
(67)

Linus T. Asong does not make the misdemeanours of the government the focus of his novels, but he occasionally takes his readers on a quick excursion into such territory. In *The Crown of Thorns*, although the ultimate cataclysm is brought about because the god of Nkokonoko Small Monje is stolen, one is worried when the D.O. reduces himself to a fool who is misled by Nicholas Virchow into coaxing some of the villagers to sell their god *Akeukeuor* to this visiting white marauder. In addition, the D.O. deceives the villagers into abandoning their well groomed leader Antony Nkoaleck for Nchindia, who is forced at gun-point to accept the throne. The result is that the administration's choice - Nchindia - ends up abusing the sacred office of a traditional ruler. Asong seems to be warning politicians to steer clear of traditional administration. This same message is blown up in *A Legend of the Dead*. Kevin Beckongcho, a one-time school headmaster suddenly finds himself paramount chief of Nkokonoko Small Monje and the Senior District Officer for Small Monje and Bimobio. In a bid to combine both offices, he hurts his villagers and the administration. While further warning the administration not to meddle in the affairs of traditional palaces and their rulers and vice versa, Asong occasionally brings to light some flaws of the administration. On one such occasion, Asong ridicules the way appointments are made in the country, such as the case of the university librarian who is taken straight from his office and made Minister of Health (176). On another occasion Asong makes fun of the news broadcast during the 3.00 pm news: "It was news time. Nothing of consequence was said beyond the usual messages of support to the Head of State." (285)

The coincidence of the news hour and its contents in the world of *A Legend of the Dead* with that of Cameroon is very significant. Asong also reveals total corruption of society when members of an auditing committee ask for bribe to falsify their findings. Asong's message is clear: nobody in this anarchy can be trusted.

N. Patrick Tata's (yet to be published) short story, "When It is Time to Die", is a very recent comment on the present trend of events in the country - Bamenda in particular. Tata's narrator, Raymond Nche, is totally disillusioned with his life and so decides to commit suicide. But the spot he chooses for this macabre exercise turns out to be a meeting ground for him and a victim of the events of July 5th (the day a determined crowd of about 100.000 people set out in Bamenda to tell their governor what they felt

about the senseless manipulation of their lives by the administration). Tata's message to his reader is summarised in a note his narrator had extracted from the dying man who must have written it with the intention of having it published. War, Tata seems to be saying, although "a term, still floating in the restless state of seminal reality should and could be avoided by you and I". In spite of this haunting premonition of a possible disaster, Tata still has hopes that this tide might be averted, for the dying man's document claims "Luckily for you and me we still have a chance and yet I am not implying that we still have much time to fool around".

Raymond Nche, the frustrated potential suicide victim, gradually exposes society's machinations. He reveals the hopelessness of the police force as a guarantor of the citizens' security when he tells of how the police failed to answer his uncle's call for help because they had no fuel in the police truck when his house had been surrounded by a gang of thieves. Yet, as the angry uncle points out, they have enough petrol to fuel helicopters which they use in spraying tear-gas "on innocent citizens to bar them from the contagious brotherhood of a united search for justice". Tata's insinuations are very disturbing: a police force with only one truck cannot be effective, yet a helicopter is undertaking a worthless mission, spraying a starving and largely unemployed population, dissipating millions in the form of loaded tear-gas canisters. Tata's story is an eye-opener and a pep talk to a population determined to forge on in their quest for justice and freedom since death will come when it will, otherwise "that Bafochu man" should be dead by now.

Obasinjom Warrior With Poems After Detention, Beasts of No Nation, And Palm-Wine Will Flow, Mind Searching, "When It is Time to Die," The Crown of Thorns and A Legend of the Dead - to cite but a few examples - are concerned with the problems plaguing the society today. This is the special character of Anglophone Cameroon Literature. It is the Literature of a patriotic minority trying to set right a hypocritical system. A Literature which is largely protest and iconoclastic in nature. Works written or performed orally by Cameroonians West of the Mungo in their indigenous languages or in English (since they are English-speaking) constitute Anglophone Cameroon Literature. The problem here is with those works written in English by writers from across the Mungo. In any case, as Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike have posited,

... language is not the crucial factor in determining the national or regional literature to which a particular work belongs. Inclusion within a national literature is something to be determined by shared values and assumptions, world outlook, and the fundamental elements of culture - echoes, in short. Although language does embody and is a vehicle for expressing cultural values, it is not the crucial generator of those values and cannot alone be relied upon to supply literary criteria (12).

We cannot, therefore, incorporate works in English by Francophone writers into the bulk of Anglophone Cameroon Literature just because they are written in English because our world-views, couched in the experiences we have and are still going through, are not the same.

Anglophone Cameroon Literature, it can be said, falls under a corpus of what one might call Cameroon literature. This notwithstanding, Anglophone Cameroon Literature is just beginning to rear its head and to steer a different course peculiar to the Anglophone's plight - the struggle of a people against "themselves". Like African Literature, which had to combat colonialism, Anglophone Cameroon Literature is faced with a descendant of this monster. Anglophone Cameroon Literature, (bearing in mind the idea of print), has just been conceived but care must be taken lest it be stillborn. This will happen if it is tied down thematically and stylistically to the unfortunate sociopolitical plight of the Anglophone Cameroonian and this nation as a whole only, and to the style of alien traditions. This, in any case, is not the likely trend, for some writers are already indicating a propensity towards the themes and style of the oral tradition. Fale Wache's *Lament of a Mother* is a commendable effort in this direction and so are some of the poems such as "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" and "Steve Biko And His Fist" in Nol Alembong's *The Passing Wind*.

It is obvious that there is an Anglophone Cameroon Literature and, like all literatures, it is a function of the trials and tribulations which mark the Anglophone Cameroonian's existence from the earliest beginnings in his encounter with the white man until today when he finds himself in a disheartening union with his Francophone counterpart. The result of this experience has been the emergence of a community with its distinctive set of cultural references which is what is mirrored in this new field of learning. Although still very young, Anglophone Cameroon Literature is forging on strong and the future is certainly promising, taking into consideration the people's very rich oral tradition which is already serving as a fountain of inspiration thematically and stylistically.

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The Moral Responsibility of the Writer in a Pluralist Society: The Case of the Cameroon Anglophone Writer

Tatah H. Mbuy

Until the publication of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, it was almost taken for granted that Black Africa had nothing to offer to modern literature. Since then an impressive plethora of writers have emerged to prove the assumption wrong. In fact, if anything, the award of the 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature to Nigeria's Akinwande Oluwale Soyinka sufficiently shows that Africa has enviable potentials.

What is true of Black Africa seems applicable to Cameroon. The paucity or the lack of influential writings by Anglophone Cameroonians has been evoked by more than one critic. Yet the names of the revered Bernard Fonlon, Kenjo Jumbam, Bole Butake, Bate Besong and Nalova Lyonga, to name only a few of those who have had the means to publish, are eloquent testimony that there are lots of termites active underground. If we blow the hot air much stronger, the colony that comes out will frighten anyone. And this is cause for joy and hope.

However, at a time when the whole of Africa, and Cameroon in particular, is at war with itself, perhaps the writers and aspirants should become more aware of their real tasks. It may be true that centuries of suppressed feelings could provoke rebellion even from the most disciplined mind, but this should not prevent the Anglophone Cameroon writer from facing his obligations squarely. The cry of the Obasinjom Warrior should not make us lose sight of the good, the beautiful and the task of the writer as an educator for critical consciousness. It was the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, who taught that *the unexamined life is not worth living*. This was a summary way of saying that any human being who is not aware of his moral responsibility neither deserves to be what he is nor be where he is. *Mutatis mutandis*, any writer who does not calmly analyse and examine his own motives, or any who has never subjected himself to pitiless self-scrutiny does not deserve to have ink in his blood.

For long, Cameroonians gave at least notional assent to one ideology. At such a time, it was perhaps easier to convince people that "quidquid magister scribit est verum" (whatever the master writes is true). Perhaps the letters before or after names were sufficient to make people believe that if such an opinion was written by such a "learned" pundit, then it was of necessity true. In Latin we say "verba locuta transit sed verba scriba manet" (the spoken word passes but the written remains). Whatever remains must have some element of truth because the metaphysicians tell us that the truth is eternal. And so

many Cameroonians lived to take the printed word for truth. In fact people were so gullible that any writer with the least wit could play foul on the people and go free.

Today, much has changed and is still changing. Not only do we now have conflicting ideologies canvassing for support even among ants, but we are given constitutional rights in an "advanced democracy" to expect conflicting ideas. In such a pluralist society, the responsibility of the writer increases. He can neither continue to remain in a peaceful grove nor continue to spit fire. On the contrary, he must realise that he now lives in a highly competitive world that will pick and choose. The writer in such a situation must be quick to recognise the fact that writing is essentially a document for the future. In as much as we must not continue to write love poems when our house is on fire, the writer must realise that a gentleman is only known when he maintains a cool head when faced with problems. The talents of a writer are not for prostitution. They are meant to enhance his vocation as spokesman of the society. A spokesman of any society must be selective in his choice of words and manner of presentation of his facts. In fact he could have the best points to advance but lose sympathy because of his rather uncouth and impolite manners.

The outburst of a multitude of writers in Anglophone Cameroon is praiseworthy and is to be encouraged. But the quality of the material that many have to offer and the monotony in the theme of protest give us reason to wonder aloud if our writers are aware of their moral obligations in a pluralist society. We have doubts as to whether our writers fully realise that they are part of a larger world where civilised minds know what is ephemeral and what is worth the Dollars and Marks. This paper is provoked by grounded suspicions that perhaps a good number of our writers do not see the delicate road they have to travel along. Hence we take the liberty and audacity to try to keep an eye on the burning house while chasing the rat, for fear it might be the witch that caused the fire.

Man is a moral being. The basic moral law is, do good and avoid evil. The writer, in keeping with that basic moral law, is condemned to write good and avoid evil.

We can never write what is good unless we are in possession of the Truth: the truth about human nature, the truth about the socio-economic and political realities. Therefore, the first moral responsibility of a writer in a pluralist society is to seek the truth, to propagate it and to defend it. The writer is condemned, so to say, to be an advocate of the Truth. What does this mean in our present context ?

I. The Writer as an Advocate of Truth

When Sir Thomas Moore, the saintly and intelligent Chancellor of the British Kingdom under Henry VIII, was asked to say things which he was convinced were not true, he

retorted: "Do I help England by populating her with liars?" His adversaries could not answer that question because it was surrounded by a swarm of angry combwasps. I wonder if any Cameroonian could answer that question today.

In 1963 when the late Bernard Nso'kika Fonlon began publishing *ABBIA*, three concepts were his guiding star - *verum, bonum, pulchrum* (the true, the good and the beautiful). There is no accident in putting the true first. Every writer makes use of his intellect. The prime object of the intellect is the acquisition of the truth. Therefore the writer's first and immediate experience is an encounter with the truth. If this is forfeited for whatever reason, the writer soon sells his mind too cheaply and could as cheaply be converted into an academic prostitute, a liability to civilised society.

Henry Peschke, renowned Polish moralist, says about truth and society:

Without the truth, the proper development of the human person and social life are impossible. Man and society cannot progress if the facts and laws of reality upon which progress must build are concealed, misrepresented or ignored. (*Christian Ethics* 2, p. 577)

A good number of journalists of the written press owe us more than an apology for the bad name they have given a noble profession. Some of our historians also deserve trial, even if only before the Supreme Court! The novelists, poets and dramatists seem to have a phobia for the truth.

Fidelity to the truth may sound bizzare to students of English Literature who know and accept fiction as a literary genre. But fiction is clearly and truly fiction, not an adulteration of the truth. Real fiction is refreshingly good and beautiful because it is created by an honest mind.

II. The Writer as Promoter of Cultural Values

Every person is a child of his society. Each society has its values that influence the thought patterns of its people. Africa in general and Cameroon in particular is a very rich treasure-house of cultural values that contributes enormously to world development. But as the itinerant Kenyan Professor, Ali Mazrui, writes:

Africa is at war. It is at a war of cultures. It is a war between indigenous Africa and the forces of western civilization. It takes the form of inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption and decay of infrastructure. (*The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, BBC publ., p. 12)

Anyone at war with himself can never give the best of himself and can never make the impact he wants to make. Some of the best traders of culture are writers. Africa in general and Cameroon in particular has a lot of rare commodities to put on the culture market. But she, along with a good number of her authors, suffers from what I have

decided to call an *Acquired Inferiority Complex* (AIC). This complex makes us believe that we have nothing to offer to others.

A distinctive mark of African culture is decency. In fact, the truly African soul is so instinctively religious that it becomes only absurdly true to think of an African writer worthy of the name who treats the theme of religion with ridicule. In Cameroon, there is hardly any serious event that is not preceded by incantation or libation to the ancestors. Hence, when one meets writers who treat this theme with shocking carelessness, all we can do is perhaps appeal to Bole Butake to let more *palm-wine flow* to "appease" the "living-dead" and the "succession in Sarkov" will continue to be a flexing of muscles.

Closely linked to this African sense of decency is the tradition never to advertise the ugly or the obscene. Yet some of what one reads today from some of our authors still needs the refinery at Sonara. Indeed, a lot verges on pornography which nauseates the refined mind. It makes us look like "Kumba Park Boys" in the heart of London.

Furthermore proverbial language, simplicity and rich symbols are peculiar features of traditional oral African literature. These should have been exploited to the full. But on the contrary, one gets the impression that a good number want to exhibit learning by using the most discordant and esoteric idioms. It is an art to be simple and entertaining.

At a time when every continent wants to establish her identity; at a time when the bicultural identity of Cameroon is threatened, and in the wake of a new consciousness among the people, the Anglophone Cameroon writer, rather than write Complaint Psalms, should be quick to realise that all the elements of good literature are found in our culture. Poetry is native to us and rhythm comes spontaneously. We have a wonderful sense of celebration and drama, especially in our initiation, adult and funeral rites. Story-telling is part of the evening life in almost all villages.

This is the wealth we have. We can make use of it but, as Chinweizu recognises, our rich heritage is disappearing while our writers hope to impress by copying and copying badly. They write what he calls "tired and ineffective" imitations of the West. How far are *the gods to be blamed* for Ola Rotimi's marriage of convenience with the Greeks? When our writers are not copying, they are complaining. They must remember that the attitude of Negritude has become obsolete in a fast-moving world. The tiger must show what it is capable of, not by devouring other animals but by using its paws courageously. Here we salute the "tigritude" of Soyinka.

III. The Writer as Research Scholar

If we hope to write originally and market our culture, we are condemned to be permanent research scholars. Every year, one is impressed by the number of serious students from Europe and America who flock to the cradle of our forefathers to carry

out research work. But one nearly suffocates to see our own students and would-be writers too busy in the bars and brothels. The result is painful: we end up consulting the very people who should have consulted us about our own culture. And we remain forever suppressed.

The old people are often the custodians of culture. A good number of these are bubbling with a wealth of knowledge. But few of our students and writers ever visit them. And then from our armchairs we hope to understand why Kenjo's catechist should go into a Kibaranko mask! Ask Sr. Sarah N. Elive and Nalova Lyonga to tell you the story of *Yoma Ndene*, or Sankie Maimo to unfold the plot of *The Mask*, then we might begin to appreciate what research can do to the quality of a writer's thoughts. We cannot afford to enter the twenty-first century as Lilliputs.

IV. The Writer as the Conscience of Society

Every good writer is something of a prophet, a seer and soothsayer in the society. He pricks the consciences of all and tries to correct faults where these are to be found. To do this effectively, the writer must see his duty as being over and above personal considerations and preferences. In a pluralist society such as ours, he must look beyond mere partisan politics and tribal concerns. And this demands a certain measure of independence, maturity and respect for personal dignity. Therefore, while we hereby add another red feather to Bole Butake's cap, we sadly inform Bate Besong that if we have not sung the *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, it is because a good number could not join the chorus too loudly without curiously complaining about the stench coming out of their own mouths.

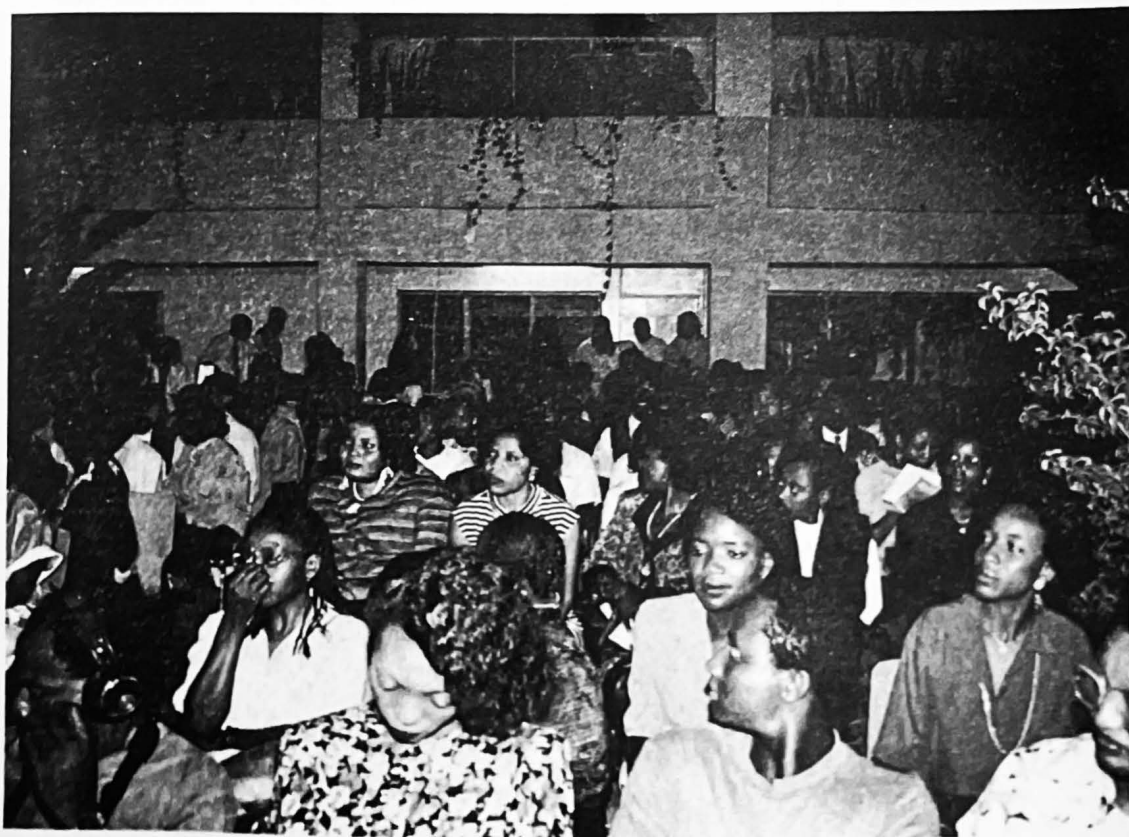
A writer who has the ambition to make a name in the world today must be ruthlessly frank with himself and respect both his conscience and that of others. Even if he must scream foul at what is foul, he has to do this from the point of view of a conscientious and objective witchdoctor. Once a sychophant, he can no longer smell the dirt in others' dustbins. This is where some of our talented journalists, in particular, have erred abysmally.

Finally, every established author has an obligation in conscience to help nurse, train, encourage and bring to light hidden talents in the young. It would be mean for a seasoned academic to see in budding talents nothing but a challenge and threat to his or her position. Sometimes one hears that such young talents are systematically but tactfully stifled or frustrated. This is academic suicide; it is criminal literary abortion, an abomination no less horrifying than that which has kept the Anglophone writer in servitude for decades. And if Bernard Fonlon did not put this under his anathemas, may I suggest that this be added as a posthumus afterthought.

IV
FOCUS ON DRAMA



Babila Mutia: *Before this Time, Yesterday*.
Goethe-Institut, January 19, 1993



Spectators at opening night of Mutia's *Before this Time, Yesterday*

Théâtre et minorités: le cas du Cameroun

Gilbert Doho

Les démocraties modernes sont confrontées à un problème de minorité. Comment concilier la loi de la majorité qui doit primer sur les instincts singuliers et la préservation des droits de groupes minoritaires au sein des grands ensembles? Telle est la question qui se pose avec acuité aux USA et au Canada où Indiens, Noirs, Portoricains, Québécois etc. doivent faire face à une vaste majorité de peuples de race blanche ayant en commun la langue anglaise. La guerre qui déchire l'Europe de l'Est après l'effondrement du communisme est en partie fondée sur ce problème des minorités.

En Afrique, il se pose de plus en plus avec acuité. Les Blancs d'Afrique du Sud s'accrochent au pouvoir arbitraire parce qu'ils se sentent une minorité parmi la majorité noire. S'ils se refusent à entendre le discours de la démocratie avec le slogan "un homme une voix", c'est parce qu'ils ont peur d'être happés par les 30 millions de Noirs. Au Cameroun, cette peur se vit au quotidien par la minorité anglophone depuis la conférence de Foumban qui précéda la Réunification du Cameroun anglophone et du Cameroun francophone. La voix singulièrement seule de Bernard Nsokika Fonlon apparut alors comme un oracle. Il vit et prédit ce que beaucoup de compatriotes anglophones reconnaissent aujourd'hui comme "The bondage of anglophones". Cette minorité s'estime aujourd'hui en Njockmassi, manière d'esclavage que connaissent les Camerounais sous la colonisation allemande et "Franco-anglaise". La convocation de la mémoire de Njock, ce vaste "chantier de la mort" où des compatriotes, enchaînés comme des esclaves, victimes du fouet et des maladies, percèrent de leurs mains nues la voie ferrée Douala-Yaoundé, n'est pas en soi une extrapolation. Des camerounais y périrent en grand nombre. L'animalisation de l'être humain y attint ce que connurent les Noirs esclaves des Amériques. Les préoccupations de la dramaturgie des auteurs anglophones du Cameroun consistent à focaliser l'attention de la communauté nationale et internationale sur le génocide (physique et culturelle) d'une minorité désarmée, que le discours officiel partisan occulte depuis des décennies. Notre propos consiste ici à montrer à travers trois pièces tragiques, *Beasts of No Nation* (1990), *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* (1991) de Bate Besong et *What God Has Put Asunder* de Victor Epie Ngome, non seulement qu'il se pose un problème anglophone depuis 1961, mais aussi la solution que semble proposer une frange importante de cette communauté.

A. Position du problème

Il aura fallu le temps d'une génération pour que la communauté anglophone commence à vivre dans sa chair les effets pernicioeux d'une alliance fondée sur la ruse et la naïveté. Une poignée de personnes de cette communauté qui croit polariser les sentiments des peuples du Sud-ouest se laisse encore aller à des illusions. Elle adhère, pour ainsi dire, à la thèse officielle partisane qui rejette un "problème anglophone" et qui, pour mieux gérer la situation, divise pour gérer. Simon Munzu, originaire de la province du Sud-ouest, interpelle ainsi ses frères victimes d'une telle politique:

It cannot be denied that, while the Francophones have firmly excluded both North-West and South-West provinces from the national banquet table since reunification, the North-West has contrived over the years to pick more crumbs that Francophones have allowed to fall from the table. In the face of this situation, it would have been more honourable and dignified of the South-West Province to fight to ensure that both Anglophone provinces take their rightful place at the national banquet table alongside their Francophone counterparts, than to focus on the struggle to pick as many crumbs as, or more crumbs than, the North West, while the two provinces remain excluded from the national banquet table.¹

Il est ici dénoncé par implication une tactique du pouvoir qui a toujours fait diversion au problème anglophone en appâtant quelques anglophones qui, prenant fait et cause pour la défense de l'état unitaire, vont en guerre contre les soit-disant sécessionnistes. Bate Besong, qui a aussi compris le jeu, fait dire au potentat dans *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, Akhikrikirii:

Voilà. (*Short pause*) They just jockey for advantage amongst each other, for power, and the hell with their assimilated minority (*eyes glaring with hatred*) cancerous growths in nation's morale.²

Cette tactique de diversion implique que les Douala et les Bamiléké par exemple peuvent être considérés, dans une certaine mesure, comme des minorités. Au même titre que les anglophones, ils ont souffert du régime néocolonial que Paris a installé à Yaoundé. L'ire populaire depuis le lancemant du SDF en mai 1990 et la revendication d'une conférence nationale souveraine participent de la prise de conscience de la masse populaire qui ploie sous divers maux perpétrés par un régime illégitime. Cependant, Munzu aussi bien que les dramaturges rappelle:

Just like Francophones, Anglophones suffered from the introduction of repressive laws in 1962, from the exile and murder of national heroes, from loss of freedom of movement and of association, including the freedom to create and run political

1 *Cameroon Post* n° 136 (December 1992), p. 10 et 11.

2 Bate Besong, *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*. Centaur Publishers, 1992, p. 26.

parties, from excessive state involvement in the economy, from the lack of accountability and transparency in the conduct of public affairs and so on.³

Mais ce constat général ne saurait se confondre avec le problème particulier à la communauté anglophone qui, selon Victor Epie Ngome, est consubstantiel au mariage que contractent les deux Cameroun anglophone et francophone en 1961. L'attitude de Weca lors son union avec Miché Garba dans *What God Has Put Asunder* constitue déjà un cri d'alarme qui va aboutir, six ans après le mariage, à une crise ouverte. Une décennie de cohabitation a permis à Miché Garba de domestiquer Weca et sa progéniture au point d'en faire des étrangers à leurs propres yeux. Autrement dit, le problème anglophone, de la Réunification à l'Etat unitaire en 1972 peut se lire ainsi qu'il suit:

Among the wrongs, however, there is one which we consider to be specific to Anglophones. It is the 1972 dissolution of the Anglophone state and the concomitant annihilation of the Anglophone system of government.⁴

Epie Ngome dit allégoriquement ce que Besong appelle "la croix de l'Anglophone". L'union entre les deux communautés a conduit à la perte de l'identité de l'Anglophone d'où l'objet du conflit dans *Beasts of No Nation*. Ce qui motive le combat des mutilés-porteurs-d'excréments dans cet univers, c'est la reconquête de leur identité perdue. Impatients, ces loques humaines rappellent à Gaston Lazare Otshama: "Carrying night soil without identification papers is tyranny."⁵ Il en va de même pour Weca qui considère que son mariage l'a aliénée de ses origines. Victor Epie Ngome dénonce ce que fut le référendum de 1972, une vaste tricherie où la minorité anglophone ne pouvait que perdre et qui culmina au crime qu'expose Weca:

Once the festivities were over, he brought a fleet of trucks and bundled my children and me out of our house. His drivers gathered our stuff trampling and damaging many things etc ... and so he forced me to settle in with him.

Since then, he has been forcing my children to learn his own mother tongue and to forget mine with which they grew up; I must abide by the customs of his clan, not mine, and ... in short he has simply been breathing down my neck since then.⁶

L'absorption des Etats fédéraux par l'Etat Unitaire constitua non seulement une violation du contrat de mariage, comme le dit Epie Ngome, mais surtout contribua à la perte de l'identité de la communauté anglophone. Ahmadou Ahidjo alias Miché Garba, "The herdsman turned business / politician" (Ngome 1992, p. 3) que Bate Besong reconnaît sous les traits de Baba Toura, n'alla jamais vers les autres avec de saines intentions. Dès le début du mariage, il ne pensa qu'à l'absorption totale de l'autre. Il ne

3 *Cameroon Post* n° 136, p. 10.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 11.

5 Bate Besong, *Beasts of no Nation*. Limbe: Nooremic Press, 1990, p. 13.

6 Victor Epie Ngome, *What God Has Put Asunder*. Yaounde, Pitcher Books Ltd, 1992, p. 53.

considéra jamais les revendications de Bernard Nsokika Fonlon que comme un cri de brigandage et de sédition. Son fils constitutionnel, Paul Biya, alias "Akhikrikirii, the Deity of Agidigidi" (Besong 1991) n'a jamais pris au sérieux les appels d'un peuple que trente années de monoculture ont réduit à une poignée d'assimilés.

A cette perte d'identité s'ajoute ce que la communauté anglophone appelle le pillage de son terroir et l'accentuation de la paupérisation de ses deux provinces. Depuis des décennies, le pétrole est un des nerfs de l'économie nationale. Depuis le début de l'exploitation des gisements de pétrole du Cameroun jusqu'aujourd'hui, aucun Anglophone n'a eu l'honneur de diriger ni la Société Nationale de Raffinage (Sonara), ni la Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures (SNH), deux entreprises parapubliques qui sont considérés par la minorité anglophone comme des structures de pillage de ses ressources. Le dramaturge Bate Besong en fait une question d'honneur. Brutal et provocateur, il pointe Paul Biya et sa tribu du doigt comme les responsables de ce pillage. Dans sa rhétorique, l'expression "frog" renvoie sans aucun doute à la communauté Beti qu'il considère comme de simples prédateurs, peu soucieux de la bonne gestion du pays et de la productivité de ses entreprises. Pour Bate Besong, ils ne constituent qu'une bande de jouisseurs improductifs. Leur arrivée au pouvoir est considérée comme l'envahissement d'une contrée par des sauterelles voraces:

When you eat money
The way locusts
Eat tons of green
When frogs eat money
The way locusts
Eat tons of green.⁷

Perte d'identité, pillage de la richesse du pays et paupérisation des Anglophones mais surtout tortures et humiliations de ces derniers constituent des caractéristiques de la politique francophone au Cameroun. L'instauration de l'Etat d'urgence dans la province du Nord-ouest aura été le point culminant de l'attitude de domination du Francophone vis-à-vis de l'Anglophone. Mgr Paul Verdzekov, archevêque de Bamenda, dans une interview à Radio France Internationale (RFI) parle d'une "armée se comportant comme en pays d'occupation". Balançoire, plongée des têtes dans des liquides infectes, broyage des ongles et orteils etc ... constituent le lot quotidien de plus de quatre cents Camerounais arrêtés à Bamenda depuis que la Cour suprême a encensé ce que l'opinion appelle aujourd'hui "coup d'Etat électoral" et dont la raison d'être reposé sur les origines du candidat anglophone que Paris ne veut pas comme Président de la République. La communauté anglophone, quoiqu'on dise, ressent aujourd'hui l'écartement de Ni John

⁷ Bate Besong, *Beasts of No Nation*, p. 13.

Fru Ndi comme la continuité d'une politique qui, depuis des années, confine l'Anglophone aux seconds rôles.

La dramaturgie de la minorité anglophone met en évidence la problématique d'une communauté qui volontairement engagea son acte de suicide en 1961. Reprenant à son compte "la complainte des forçats" de la région de Njock dans les années 1940, Bate Besong peut alors chanter le malheur actuel de sa communauté:

Mini-mini Mini-mini
O Minimini
Talkam no fear
O minimini
You fear you go die
O minimini
You no fear you go die
O minimini⁸

Cependant, pour de nombreux autres dramaturges de la minorité anglophone des questions subsistent: Faut-il parler ou ne pas parler du "problème anglophone" au Cameroun? Faut-il se taire parce qu'on a peur d'être taxé de sécessionnisme? Quand on choisit d'en parler, quelle orientation donner à la solution du dit problème? La partition du pays ou la solution du problème dans le triangle national? Autant d'interrogations que Bate Besong et Victor Epie Ngome n'ont nullement voilé dans leurs oeuvres.

B. Des protagonistes de la dramaturgie de minorité

Les personnages au coeur du problème anglophone sont aisément identifiables dans la mesure où l'univers référentiel se lit à travers ces textes. Le style d'Epie Ngome participe de l'allégorie. C'est dire que le mariage entre Weca élevée (tout comme Emeka) dans un orphelinat dirigé par le pasteur anglais Gordon et Miché Garba n'est que la métaphore de la réunification du Cameroun anglophone et du Cameroun francophone. Le renvoi du port des alliances à dix ans plus tard après un essai de vie en commun, la parodie du référendum après ces dix années de vie séparée (Ngome 1992, p. 52), l'allusion au désintérêt du Révérend Gordon vis-à-vis de sa protégée Weca et à l'omniprésence de Louis, protecteur de Miché Garba, sont autant d'éléments qui ancrent le lecteur / spectateur dans le contexte du Cameroun. Mais si Epie Ngome est plus subtile dans sa manière de présenter les protagonistes de ce drame, il en va autrement de Bate Besong. Parce que souverainement en colère, Besong adopte un style pamphlétaire. Les mutilés-porteurs-d'excréments ne sont que les "Anglophones" à qui il est parfois collé l'étiquette "Anglo-Biafrais". Bate Besong ne leur reconnaît pas d'identité propre. Ils sont appelés

8 *Ibidem*, p. 26.

Night soil Men, Blindman, Boy, Cripple Woman, Workers, Market Woman, Minority Nnyanyan, autrement dit, des "lieux" communs, des êtres sans identité propre. Quantité négligeable, ils ne tiennent socialement que les rôles les plus insignifiants. Comment lire cette rhétorique autrement que comme la volonté permanent depuis 1961 d'écarter la minorité anglophone de la "table du banquet"?

A l'opposé, il y a l'être humain, celui qui s'est attribué la meilleure place à table. Besong choisit, pour les deux dictateurs, des noms à connotation onomatopéique. Comrade Dealsham Aadingingin (Besong 1990) et HRH Baal Njunghu Akhikrikirii (Besong 1991) sont des épiphénomènes issues d'une même aire culturelle. Ces mégalomanes, dans leurs envolées verbales, révèlent leur idiome premier: la langue Beti. Plus d'une fois, Akhikrikirii s'écrit "Bebele Zamba'a". Se surprend-il à s'égaliser à Dieu, alors il s'écrit: "I'm Messiah! AM AM ... Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!" (Besong 1991, p. 24)

En multipliant les éléments d'ancrage référentiel tels que "Je vous ai compris" (Besong 1991, p. 30), "Truth comes from the top" (Besong 1991, p. 37) etc. l'allusion à Paul Biya, l'actuel Président du Cameroun, est on ne peut plus évidente. Ce qu'il dit dans sa fiction, Bate Besong le reprend dans les nombreux articles et interviews qu'il accorde aux médias nationaux. Récemment encore, il s'attaquait ainsi à l'ennemi premier de la minorité anglophone dans *Cameroon Post*:

The people of the South-West do see and sense and almost smell that paradox: a chained and harassed people whose province has become the paradise where well-off Mvomeka'a blest forgather to live good life as they see it.⁹

La colère et la violence de Bate Besong naissent de ce constat: un peuple riche est paupérisé par une poignée de Kleptocrates que soutient la France. Dans *Requiem For the Last Kaiser*, c'est l'ambassadeur de France qui est le chef de gang de la mafia franco-francophone qui pille le Cameroun. Besong considère Biya comme le principal responsable de la misère nationale et anglophone en particulier. Les attaques du dramaturge contre ce Président sont si crues et si directes qu'un agent du Centre National de Renseignements et de Recherche (CENER), Stéphane Biatcha, se vit dans l'obligation de rédiger une lettre de dénonciation contre le dramaturge et le metteur en scène Bole Butake lors de la première de *Beasts of No Nation*:

Il s'agit d'un véritable pamphlet politique dirigé contre le régime en place qui est tenu pour responsable de la crise économique, par la corruption, le favoritisme et l'exportation des capitaux vers les banques étrangères.

L'auteur soutient que les francophones au pouvoir sont responsables de la crise économique parce qu'ils entretiennent la gabegie et les détournements de fonds.

9 *Cameroon Post* n° 136 (December 1992), p. 13.

Parmi les francophones (frogs), un accent particulier est mis sur les Beti, amis et frères du Président Biya qui sont responsables de l'état du Cameroun.¹⁰

Ainsi, apparaissent les personnages et les destinataires du "drame anglophone" au Cameroun. Bate Besong et Victor Epie Ngome s'adressent d'abord à leur communauté, les laissés-pour-compte de la table nationale. Leur dramaturgie constitue une manière de décharge électrique qui doit les réveiller de leur long sommeil. Elle interpelle aussi dans la communauté nationale, les Camerounais nantis mais insouciantes, parce que jouisseurs égocentriques. Elle constitue une invitée à une seconde table de négociation où après exorcisation des démons du passé, une nouvelle règle de jeu doit être fixée pour des générations à venir.

C. De la méthode et des objectifs

Comme on le constate, le problème de la minorité anglophone existe depuis les premiers jours du mariage entre les Cameroun occidental et oriental (Ngome 1991, p. 52). Il n'est donc pas nouveau. Ce qui l'est, c'est la manière de l'aborder. Le vent d'Est y a grandement contribué. Les tentatives de solution ne sont pas non plus nouvelles. Le "Cameroon Anglophone movement" dont les membres ont été pourchassés et torturés suit les pas d'un Bernard Nsokika Fonlon, d'un Albert Mukong ou d'un Gorji Dinka qui, en même temps que Mongo Beti, montrent que ce problème sera l'un des cauchemars du "Protégé de Louis Paul Aujoulat". Déjà en 1985, Mongo Beti non seulement ouvre les colonnes de sa revue *Peuples Noirs-Peuples Africains* aux étudiants anglophones, Gorji Dinka et autres, mais aussi écrit:

Le fait est que, avec l'accession au pouvoir en 1982 de Paul Biya, le nouveau dictateur camerounais, poulain des socialistes et de François Mitterrand, commence une accélération significative de la francisation des Camerounais anglophones. A l'évidence, on a décidé en haut lieu de mettre les bouchées doubles, comme si l'on avait estimé avoir enfin les moyens politiques qui avaient manqué auparavant. Qu'est-ce à dire sinon que la mission prioritaire assignée à Paul Biya par François Mitterrand était, entre autre, d'en finir une fois pour toutes avec cette verrue anglophone, ou plutôt cette lèpre sur la face limpide de la francophonie?¹¹

Des essais ont donc été jusqu'à récemment le lieu de focalisation de ce problème. Il semble que les dramaturges ont emboîté le pas aux essayistes du moment que le théâtre apparaît comme le langage le plus accessible au plus grand nombre. Tel semble être le point de vue de Bate Besong dont la dramaturgie participe de la révolte des spoliés. C'est à eux, ses frères anglophones qu'il s'adresse en premier lieu. Aussi, préconise-t-il pour eux un traitement de choc, l'horreur, pour les sortir de leur léthargie.

10 Stéphane Biatcha, "Lettre à Monsieur le Chancelier de l'Université de Yaoundé", 28 mars 1991.

11 *Peuples Noirs - Peuples Africains* 48 (Novembre-Décembre 1985), p. 3.

Son univers dramatique est non seulement peuplé de loques humaines en putréfaction, mais il s'en dégage un relent putride qui empeste tout. C'est d'un univers de boue et de crottins qu'il s'agit. Le lecteur / spectateur de Besong est constamment obligé de tenir ses narines fermées à cause de la putréfaction de cet univers. Dramaturge courroucé, Bate Besong adhère à la dramaturgie de provocation. On est même tenté de dire que sa pièce de théâtre participe non pas d'un simple pamphlet, mais d'un slogan politique où l'invective n'est pas absente:

What the rich thief has put together, let no poor jaguda man put asunder ... ¹²

proclame-t-il contre les oppresseurs de son peuple.

Le dramaturge est tout aussi provocateur quand il assimile les dirigeants camerounais à de vulgaires prédateurs. Dans son imagination, la cible, lorsqu'il interpelle les "frogs", n'est personne d'autre que le Président et sa tribu. Impatient et enragé, il lance aussi bien à la face de la masse paupérisée que de l'oppresseur:

The poor people of today are no longer as patient as those of old, Amougou Atangana; they will no longer sit by and watch the macarana'a vicars and their French allies prosper while their children go naked and hungry; they'll not sit meekly and pray for those who have sold out to neocolonial bribery!¹³

Le dramaturge est en fait en guerre contre une clique d'usurpateurs myopes et imbus de leur personnalité. Il serait proprement inouï de leur tenir un langage sensé d'où le style iconoclaste de Bate Besong.

Il y a constamment chez ce dramaturge séillant, une volonté d'employer la langue du public-cible. Et comme il agit dans un contexte multilingue, Bate Besong passe constamment de l'Anglais au Français; d'une langue locale (Ewondo, Bakossi etc.) au Pidgin. Son syntagme est ici et là un mélange de toutes ces données. Il évite une langue anglaise standard avec une syntaxe normée. Il bouscule la structure de la phrase aussi bien que celle du mot. Tout cela donne un mélange incongru, une manière de gallimatias où le son et le sens s'imbriquent (Besong 1991, p. 1). Ce qu'entend le spectateur, c'est une suite de grelons qui résonnent, assourdissants, dans son tympan. Par ce style de guerre, Bate Besong polarise la révolte, la colère de toute une minorité qui déjà en 1985, avertissait par la bouche de sa jeunesse:

Quand nous parlons de combat et d'effusion de sang, nous ne nous trompons pas et n'avons pas en esprit gloire et facilité. Non, absolument pas! Nous réalisons déjà fort bien les maux de la guerre; nous savons que cela entraînera la perte insupportable des vies, des deuils dans les familles, la disparition des époux, des pères, des enfants, des parents, des proches, des amis; la douleur des collectivités sociales et économiques, la destruction et la dévastation totale, l'insécurité généralisée, et surtout l'incertitude de l'issue. Nous n'avons aucune illusion sur ces

¹² *Beasts of No Nation*, p. 1.

¹³ *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, p. 13.

malheurs, mais nous les assumerons sans hésitation puisqu'aucune autre solution que la guerre ne nous est offerte.¹⁴

Pour Besong comme pour ces jeunes, la phase des pleurs est passée. Il faut un choc, une étincelle pour conscientiser les deux parties en conflit. L'ire populaire qui s'empare de Bamenda ainsi que la guerre en pays Béti contre les "Anglo-Bami" après les élections controversées du 11 octobre 1992 est symptomatique d'un fait. Le Cameroun est un immense volcan en attente d'éruption. Des politiciens insensés, en prêchant le faux et en réprimant tout acte osé, font de ce pays un virtuel brasier à l'instar de la Yougoslavie, du Burundi et d'autres pays où les minorités se sentent prises au piège de la démocratie. Si rien n'est entrepris, semble dire le dramaturge Bate Besong, la voie unique offerte à la minorité sera la confrontation. Comment ne pas lire ainsi la dramaturgie de la minorité lorsqu'un personnage, Student, symbole de la jeunesse anglophone frustrée et contrainte à aller ailleurs quérir le savoir, affirme?

We must break the chains that hold us in bondage.¹⁵

Qui a vu l'activisme de la jeunesse anglophone au sein du "Parlement", mouvement étudiantin qui ébranle en même temps que des masses populaires le ciel camerounais en 1991, ne peut que conclure que la minorité anglophone a pris conscience du fait que toute démarche légale, à l'instar de celle que propose Epie Ngome, n'est qu'un langage de dupes. Ce qu'exige la minorité anglophone et par ricochet toutes les autres communautés, c'est un forum national où de nouvelles règles du jeu démocratique, peuvent être concensuellement prises tout en sauvegardant les intérêts des minorités. Conviées à une même table, et après avoir lavé le linge sale, toutes les parties poseraient les jalons d'un futur juste. A ce propos les étudiants anglophones écrivaient déjà en 1985:

Une politique qui refuse de reconnaître au Cameroun deux cultures principales - une minoritaire et une autre majoritaire - n'est qu'une ruse pour nous berner.¹⁶

En inquiétant ou en choquant, la dramaturgie de la minorité anglophone veut démystifier le discours mensonger et dénuder les partisans de la ruse. Ce que visent Bate Besong et Epie Ngome participe de la même vision que celle des étudiants anglophones qui interpellent leurs parents:

Si vous avez souffert pour vos enfants, si vous nous aimez, si vous ne voulez pas délibérément nous rejeter et nous condamner à vivre sans espoir et sans avenir, ne perdez pas cette occasion d'exiger pour le cameroun une situation dans laquelle le respect, les aspirations et les droits de la minorité soient jalousement protégés par la constitution.¹⁷

14 *Peuples Noirs - Peuples Africains* 48 (Novembre-Décembre 1985), p. 16.

15 *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, p. 5.

16 *Peuples Noirs - Peuples Africains* 48 (Novembre-Décembre 1985), p. 17.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 17.

La dramaturgie des écrivains de la minorité anglophone choque dans le but de conscientiser. Elle interpelle, injurie, sollicite à cause de l'ampleur de la blessure. Elle accentue les données particulières au sein du vaste ensemble. En participant de la rhétorique de la cruauté comme le demandait Antonin Artaud, elle vise l'effet cathartique où des illuminés comme Etat-Major Andze Abessolo dans un *méa culpa* peuvent reconnaître:

Njunghu, you can't go against the will of the people: the voiceless, the mangled, the wretched and the deceived whose strength lies in their unity ... They are the divine majority, the steel of Revolution! (*Pause*) Where should I begin? It is a battle of the entire nation against the dark forces of tyranny, tribalism and greed which we incarnated.¹⁸

C'est en abordant, avec toutes les passions et toutes les énergies les problèmes particuliers de la communauté anglophone que la littérature camerounaise d'expression anglaise s'est toujours manifestée comme la plus dérangement, parce que la plus engagée de nos littératures nationales.

¹⁸ *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, p. 69.

Historicity and New Anglophone Cameroon Drama

Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh

This paper is a brief attempt to examine the background material that informs much of contemporary Anglophone drama in Cameroon. This drama is peculiar within a bilingual country like ours because, it should be obvious to any keen observer, that it is far removed from the molièresque influences in much of its Francophone counterpart. The works to be examined in this brief survey include Sankie Maimo's *I Am Vindicated* (1959), *Sov Mbang, the Soothsayer* (1968) and *The Mask* (1968); Bole Butake's *Lake God* (1986), *The Survivors* (1989) and *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* (1990); Bate Besong's *Beasts of No Nation* (1989); Victor Epie'Ngome's *What God Has Put Asunder* (1992) and Ba'bila Mutia's *Before This Time, Yesterday* (1992). And if you will allow me a little vanity, I will talk about some of my works, especially *Munyenge* (1990), *The Magic Fruit* (1990) and *The Inheritance* (1992).

Essentially, the drama to be examined here is that which is produced by playwrights who consider themselves watchdogs of their society, making their roles more meaningful in their application of language, themes and dramatic techniques. I am dealing here with writers who are trying to develop a revolutionary aesthetic geared towards raising the consciousness of their audiences - more than their readership - because some of the plays remain to be published even though they enjoy a lot of acclaim in productions. Mass mobilization and an awakening to the realities of social inequities are principal concerns of this theatre which uses for its launch pad a certain historical platform and approaches its subject mostly from a dialectical point of view. Social emancipation thus becomes the mainstay of this theatre, be it the emancipation of one class from the other, one generation from the other, one region from the other, or one gender from the other. This preoccupation reflects an urgency to highlight the socio-political realities of their society, most often protesting against the social injustices and aberrations, and sometimes attempting proposals as to how these could be righted. It is a theatre that makes no secret of its avowed aims: to raise the level of consciousness of its audiences, mobilize them to action, awaken them to the political realities of their condition, educate them and, most of all, entertain them. What is amazing is that these objectives are being systematically achieved by almost every playwright under study.

Let me define historicity which here provides the thematic paradigm. By historicity, I refer to the historical quality or character, which should be distinguished from history as

a factual narration of events in the past. In many recent Anglophone plays there is a sense that one is grappling with events which may either emanate from the historical past or may even be contemporary, but doing so in a style that is at once velvety, piquant and objective, depending on the humour of the writer. While there are those who put away aesthetics, the urge to create beautifully in favour of a starkly direct style considering that the urgency of the message cannot afford to be immersed in literary sophistication, others think the message should be subjected to the norms of literature. Due to the immediacy of the theatrical event, the play's success, however, can only be determined by the audiences who come to the theatre, while its perenity as literature will have to be left for posterity to judge.

I will begin with the dean of Anglophone playwrights, Sankie Maimo, whose first play *I Am Vindicated* deals with the conflict between tradition and modernity, between traditional medicine and science, represented on the one hand by Bola the schoolboy and, on the other, by Baba Kasim, the village sorcerer and fetish priest. Bola, a brilliant school pupil, challenges the very foundations of tribal life represented by Baba Kasim, when he proves the latter to be a charlatan. The whole play revolves around this conflict, resulting finally in the triumph of modernity over tradition with the suicide of Baba Kasim. However, from a dramatic point of view the play is not particularly interesting, but this is to be understood because it was the first work of a budding writer. Sankie Maimo's maturation as a playwright comes in his second work *Sov Mbang, the Soothsayer*, which is a play that equally deals with the conflict between tradition and modernity, positing Christian and the traditional belief systems within the spectrum of their historical confrontation. *Sov Mbang* can be said to be of the first generation of Cameroonian plays which focused on the encounter between Western and traditional African cultures. This time, it is tradition that emerges victorious with a determination on the part of the playwright to ascertain his Africanity. The didactic purpose of the play is never concealed, articulating a need for the development of a discriminative capacity and a critical consciousness in the acceptance of foreign value systems. In *The Mask* we are involved in a contemporary conflict of what entails truth, one of those platitudes that has totally lost its meaning in contemporary society. The play is full of invective against a morally bankrupt system that represses all forms of expression. It is a powerful indictment of contemporary society and all its hypocrisy. Baye, a young law undergraduate resorts to spending his time in philosophical speculation in an attempt to understand the meaning of truth, freedom and happiness, but wherever he takes his search to, he is met with a barrage of suspicion, resistance, and sometimes downright rejection resulting from a pervasive sense of fear that has enveloped his society. The mask becomes a symbol of hypocrisy, a disguise to ward off veracity, or simply, a survival kit. There is a certain existential appeal in this play, brought about by the very nature of

the search in which the hero is involved. Moving away from the traditional setting of *Sov Mbang*, Maimo, in a very experimental though sometimes wordy style, attempts to portray a society undergoing serious mutations and how it tries to cope with these, albeit not often successfully. However, while much of the work of Maimo has a bearing on that of the new Anglophone playwrights, he can be rightly considered as a precursor since so much has happened after his time that informs recent writing.

Bole Butake's *Lake God*, which appeared in the wake of the Lake Nyos catastrophe, deals essentially with metaphysical explanations far removed from the scientificism that has so far shrouded the investigations. In this play, Butake, taking off from a factual happening, brings in dramatic invention to explain how the demise comes about, tracing it to the abnegation of a people's mores. But this is simply an excuse which allows him to expand his world-view from the traditional village setting to encompass the happenings of contemporary society. *Lake God* thus becomes a metaphoric statement on how a society has come to invert its value systems, positing this alongside a certain spiritualism which should provide for societal renewal or regeneration, that is, if that society can afford such a regenerative capacity. In *Lake God*, then, it is not the importance of the actual event that provides the focal point of the action but rather the nature of the collective stock-taking that the play calls for. In its didactic thrust *Lake God* essentially draws our attention to a metaphysical questioning about what has become of our collective essence. It is an existential journey into our collective unconscious - a search for fresh paradigms for a future society - one which should be grounded on a perfect understanding of our relationship with the unknown gods who hover permanently over and above us. Little wonder then why the play revolves more around the conflict between Christianity and totemism with the result that the virtual defeat of the latter can only result in a catastrophe as symbolized by the explosion of the lake! Butake carefully wrought an extended metaphor of contemporary society presenting us with all the conflicts and contradictions which have led to our current demise, yet he does this inventively and with delicate subtlety.

In *The Survivors* he is less circumspect than he was in *Lake God*. As a sequel to *Lake God*, *The Survivors* was also written as a consequence of historically documentable happenings. In the aftermath of the explosion of Lake Nyos, international aid flowed amply into the country but this was accompanied by systematic looting. *The Survivors* castigates national insensitivity and gross individualism as against a communal sensitivity. The central image of the play is obviously the venality of the security officer who uses his position not only to divert what has been sent as relief material to the survivors of the explosion that decimates almost everyone but, adding insult onto injury, goes ahead to physically exploit and abuse the heroine who has to trade her sexuality for the pittance needed for the collective survival of her people. Here, again, a historical event has

provided the source material which is used to comment on a general social malaise. In this wise, Butake becomes a sort of communal spokesman, a role he enjoys playing even outside the theatre. He is perpetually expressing a communal angst, imbuing his works with a holistic concern with the full spectrum of the national cultural dynamic. In *The Survivors*, Butake seeks to provide his society with a regenerative capacity through Mboysi, but the forces that annihilate all positive values are overwhelming, and not even the revolutionary heroine can survive. Her survival could not achieve much since, in the process of trying to save her people, she had to use means which make her abhorrent and rid her of that moral force needed to redeem her society.

The existence of such a moral force is what we find in Earth goddess in *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*. Here, again, an identifiable realistic situation is created in which the Chief Priest, Shey Ngong, is posited against the immoral Fon. Ironically, the Fon is never brought on stage until the very end when he is cursed to death by Earth goddess, indicating that the author has already dismissed his corrupt existence. The powerful image of the Kibaranko is used as an intermediary between two conflicting forces but the resolution can only be brought about through the mysterious intervention of Earth Goddess. In the end there is a kind of utopia in which "the affairs of the land shall be decided by all the people in the market-place" (p. 50). *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* is Butake's best constructed work and is full of theatrical artifice, yet there is a feeling of uneasiness generated by the author's rather strong ideological leanings which confirm his condemnation of the ubiquitous presence of annihilating forces symbolized in the debauchery going on within the palace. That audiences identify so easily with this play is a clear indication that the playwright once again succeeds through his creative impulsion to paint an identifiable image of his society. Butake, through *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, is not just simply a visionary but becomes one of the precursors of the current revolutionary fervor which has encapsulated his society, that powerful clamouring for change that has been manifested more through Anglophone Cameroon drama than through its Francophone counterpart. This is perhaps the hallmark of Anglophone drama today - a drama that forcefully articulates a communal angst.

Bate Besong, in his cryptic *Beasts of No Nation*, is easily the most ascerbic critic of contemporary society on the current dramatic scene. His play exploits historical material, in this case the re-unification of Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon, and then goes on to provide a rather overt and sometimes linguistically "shocking" indictment of contemporary society, the evils of which to him are perpetuated mostly by the Francophones with a few of their Anglophone allies. His characters and situations, even when they are spelt from right to left, are easily identifiable and the audiences love to see the lampooning of their exploiters. The "shitologist" of a playwright is steadfast and blunt. He is direct and piquant, holding out against hypocrisy, the bane of society. The

excessively topical nature of this work, however, may constitute its own demise. This brings us to the question of dramatic style: whether or not a writer through his works should be an overt propagandist, or whether literature should conceal its message to the point of making it obtuse. Bate Besong's writing is a case in point. While his source material is historical, he is sometimes obsessed with aesthetics to the point where his work becomes virtually un-understandable. His linguistic inflations can make reading difficult, yet, on stage, the images can be very telling. On occasion, as in *Beasts of No Nation*, where he attempts to portray more directly his own perception of society, the images are shocking, though, for him, the choice is imposed by the despicable nature of the circumstances he presents. And for this he has no apology to make to any one and has no need to.

The same historical source is to be found in Victor Epie' Ngome's witty and hilarious *What God Has Put Asunder*. The satiric bent of the play is embedded right in the title which is an inversion of the old adage "what God has put together, let no man put asunder". Epie' Ngome's play looks at the "marriage" problem between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon and portrays this as one of incompatibility with the heroine, Weca, an obvious acronym for West Cameroon, being the victim of perpetual exploitation by all those with whom she comes in contact. Starting off her life in a convent, she is seduced by the Priest (symbolizing Europe), who in a desperate cover-up tries to force her into marriage first with Emeka (Nigeria); then she gets caught up with Garba (East Cameroon) represented by the Moslem Ahidjo. Her final cry of protest represents the current crisis of confidence and identity that has emerged within the Anglophone community of Cameroon resulting in a lot of unrest as we have come to know it. Unlike Bate Besong whose style is vituperative, Epie'Ngome of the famous Rambler Programme of Radio Cameroon, is more suave in his choice either of language or of dramatic situations. *What God Has Put Asunder* is full of innuendo where *Beasts of No Nation* is abrasive in its indictment. Yet the same echoes of protest against exploitation and domination are to be heard; and, as in the case of Butake, both Besong and Epie'Ngome have joined him in becoming the conscience of their society, using their works to clarify positions hitherto blurred by years of distortion and injustice, and they all do this with such successful effect.

Ba'bila Mutia's *Before This Time, Yesterday*, opens in a surrealistic world of dream to move back into the realm of realism, yet the source material is still historical. His ultimate endeavour is to renounce the treachery that characterized the pre-independence struggle, especially within the ranks of the UPC Movement. It is not surprising therefore that the antagonist of the play is Commandant Sikamba. What Mutia does in his play, which is in the best of the agit-prop tradition, is to try to raise an outcry at the various betrayals that continue to permeate the Cameroonian political

fabric, thereby compromising the very search for any genuine transition or change. If this were a treatise on style, then the overt nature of Mutia's comment may be called in question and the obvious parallels he makes with contemporary figures could even be considered libellous, but then one of the roles of art is to challenge the dictates of those in power and to subvert all that is anathema to the collective existence. When Abassa, uncle to the hero Sango, tells the latter that nothing has changed and that they should leave the past to itself because history has no ghosts, Sango replies that he is going to share some memories with Commandant Sikamba. It is the search for truth and the re-writing of a national history fraught with distortions and untruths, that Ba'bila Mutia attempts to unearth through the process of collective hypnotism. Sango, thus becomes the symbol of a new generation in search of a new positive image of itself while the likes of his Uncle Abassa, and his boss, Onana, are of the older generation who have skeletons to hide in their closets, and who thus make every attempt to forestall any semblance of change that may expose them.

This is perhaps where I might talk about what motivates me to write.

To save myself the embarrassment, I will quote critics. Commenting on *Munyenge*, Nalova Lyonga talks about the adaptation of motifs and structures to modern contexts and technology, and that character and theme are made more relevant to articulate in vivid dialogue modern conflicts found forever within problematic relationships, viz., generational and gender conflicts. I may say that these conflicts characterize much of my work. *Munyenge*, which uses as its source material a local folktale, deals with the experiences of a fastidious village belle who is determined to ward off pressures from her parents by marrying the man of her choice. In the end, her choice turns out to be wrong because she marries into the spirit world, but she has taken the first step to challenge the traditional authority of her parents and to win her independence. In *The Magic Fruit*, the quintessence of the conflict is that which opposes the Chief to his subjects, the former having, through excessive avarice, appropriated the magic fruit for himself which was meant for the community at large. But the community is vindicated in the end because they discover the Chief's delinquency and chase him out of the village.

In *The Inheritance* the story revolves around the return home of a former ambassador to a chiefly inheritance only to be challenged. He must fight to hold his place and this is only made possible because of the maladroitness of his various opponents. *The Inheritance*, says Gilbert Doho, is beyond family intrigues, an echo of current political discourse - the necessity for clarification before creating the basis for a more radiant future. John Lambo sees the play as portraying age-old cultural, political and generational conflicts, while Joseph Bannavi considers it a play about doubt and belief, happiness and regret, jealousy and prejudice, intimidation and violence, simplicity and misconception, lust and love, avarice and generosity. On the other hand, while some

critics like Nalova Lyonga, in a televised discussion, have found the play devoid of any political engagement, given the justified security of the chief, others like Bole Butake say that the message is too embedded in aesthetic sophistication. Kwasen Gwangw'wa, however, says the message is unmistakably bold, adding that where reason or rationality gives way to intrigue fuelled by greed and inordinate ambition, self-destruction usually follows, after painful self-recognition through the acquisition of knowledge. He sees this as the tragedy of power politics when men try to make just causes unjust, and unjust causes just, when men in power or those seeking power fail to accept their limitations and so plunge themselves and their society into annihilation. Need I comment on the differences in critical opinion?

We thus find among the new generation of Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights a constant preoccupation with the problems of being of their societies, a continuing search for a new world-view in which the community can become master of its own destiny. What we find with all of these playwrights is that the theatre becomes for them a kind of classroom of concentrated reality through which they examine the problems of being and becoming with which their society is confronted, sometimes directly and sometimes through a dialectical process. It is difficult to come across the work of an Anglophone playwright today which does not deal with such problems, using history as the takeoff point. This thematic approach obviously calls for a new dramaturgy which is not only based on protest, but on developing a critical consciousness intended to create a new *Weltanschauung*. We have been told by Nalova Lyonga during the round table that it is the aesthetics of victimization that is emerging in much of this drama.

This kind of perpetual rejection of the status quo results sometimes in a rather vituperative style, albeit much to the delight of the audiences which easily identify with these works. If we take the example of Yaounde, many of these new playwrights have become house-hold names, and this in less than ten years. They are now identified as the conscience of their society.

The same cannot be said of the slapstick that characterizes much Francophone Cameroonian drama with such debilitating effect on the national consciousness, although exceptions are to be made of Gilbert Doho, Kum'a N'dumbe and René Philombe. We shall not venture into any details here since the subject of the present discussion is limited to Anglophone Cameroonian drama. In conclusion, one can only say that many of these new Anglophone playwrights see themselves in a role of developing the critical consciousness of their society, of mobilizing people for change through the destruction of the "culture of silence" which has so far subjected them to years of oppression. Their role seems to be that of building the foundation of a new society in which social justice and a sense of communal belonging can prevail. In their haste to bring about such a "golden future", they sometimes engage themselves in actions beyond the theatre and have time

and again had close brushes with the powers behind the status-quo. That they have continued relentlessly in their quest is something which is laudable. That they have come to have a following is a personal vindication for most of them. Let us only hope that we can collectively sustain the effort and that they can, with other forces of change, bring about the golden future they justifiably look forward to.

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The Popular Nature Of Anglophone Cameroonian Drama

Asheri Kilo

This paper observes Anglophone Cameroonian drama from the point of view of popular theatre, theatre which is geared towards the interest of the masses.

Theatre in forms of civic and religious ritual, popular entertainment and political protest is familiar to virtually every culture. As popular entertainment, theatre has become the cultural arena representing the struggles, desires, frustrations and aspirations of Cameroonians. Anglophone Cameroonian theatre is rooted in the peoples' art forms, expressing the ideology of the ordinary man. Anglophone drama is becoming increasingly popular as the re-enlivened traditional medium of communication aimed at improving our way of life. Theatre is gradually being moved out of the confines of the literary art into a cultural and social experience for the less educated majority.

Although there are different shades of meaning for the concept of the popular, the popularity of Anglophone Cameroonian drama stems from its accessibility to a wide audience. Its "theatrical and dramatic expression can best be comprehended in the light of the popular provenance of its production and reception."¹

Biodun Jeyifo has attested that popular drama "...is that drama produced by and offered for the enjoyment of the largest combination or grouping (of people) possible within a society."²

In this regard some Anglophone Cameroonian Drama can be said to be of a popular nature. Its popularity stems from the language of performance and the accessibility to the audience in terms of linguistic idioms and in terms of the cultural components of myths, legends, proverbs, chants and mimes.

The average popular Cameroonian theatre producer is not a product of any drama school. He is for the most part a self-made theatrician who never deserted the environment in which he was born. It is the contemporaneousness of such producers, the immediate relevance of most of their theatre work, the modernity of their vision which make them popular Cameroonian artists.

What Yemi Ogunbiyi says of the Nigerian popular dramatist that "all that a living popular performance needs is not necessarily a text or an elaborate stage, but rather a place, a time, an audience, and himself ..." ³ remains true for the Cameroonian dramatist.

1 Biodun Jeyifo, *The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre of Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine Production, 1984, p. 3.

2 *ibid.*

3 Yemi Ogunbiyi, *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine Production, 1981, p. 11.

The popular must be considered complete even as it involves an expression of physical pleasure and joy. In this category one must include all those plays in which amusement and entertainment appear to figure most prominently. Victor Musinga's is a classic example. Musinga has created over the years an extensive theatre-going public in the South-West Province in particular, embracing the entire range of occupational and socio-economic groups and classes.

In the corpus of Anglophone Cameroonian drama one can differentiate serious, literary drama from the comic genre. The serious literary drama is the type produced by Bole Butake, Bate Besong, Sankie Maimo, and Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh. Plays such as *Lake God, And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, *The Survivors*, *Beasts of No Nation*, *Succession in Sarkov*, *Sasse Symphony*, *The Inheritance* and *The Classparty* are intellectually more prestigious and more assured of the gratitude of posterity.

The literary dramatists are popular as far as the university is concerned. The Yaounde University Theatre Troupe and The Flame Players have attempted to extend their impact beyond the frontiers of the university by touring some of their plays in the North-West and South-West provinces, and also broadcasting by television. In this way such plays are made directly accessible to the most humble and lowly of our theatre-going audiences. These audiences are thrilled by the plays, for they "capture the credulities, absurdities, prejudices and follies of much of our contemporary social life."⁴ Touring the literary plays has therefore become a significant move towards the convergence of the literary and the popular in our contemporary theatre.

Anglophone playwrights do not hesitate to exploit new aesthetic opportunities as they incorporate traditional art forms into their drama. Playwrights seem to be working within the existing situation of performing arts in Cameroon, that is, such form and content as traditional dance, music, praise poems, masquerades, rituals as well as the established performance situation - the given actor-audience relationship.

Most of the popular plays, as listed in 1992,⁵ are still in the form of unpublished manuscripts, which have hardly reached any publishers, or have been rejected by them. Micheal Etherton has observed of most African publishers that

... the Western literary conventions are often used by readers of published literary works in African societies. The criteria which might be employed by the mass of people who make up the audience for the plays themselves do not appear to be articulated, though I would have thought that the state of being semi-literate ought not to prevent these people from participating in the development of the cultural

⁴ Biodun Jeyifo, "Literary drama and the search for a Popular Theatre in Nigeria" in *The Truthful Lie*. London: New Beacon Books Ltd. 1985, pp. 78-88.

⁵ Asheri Kilo, *Anglophone Cameroonian Drama 1969-1991*. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, February 1992).

expression of a changing society, and theatrical representations in particular are primarily literary.⁶

One must accept that most popular Cameroonian plays, especially those by Musinga are not very skilfully written. They are mostly working scripts which are modified through improvisation. Highly dramatic action makes for entertainment and the audience to whom the drama is directed is thrilled by the performance. The sound and fury arguments mark the rapid sequence of action which characterizes popular drama. Such visual and sound images contribute to the theatrical success of the plays.

The moral and didactic nature of Anglophone popular plays is worth mentioning here, although we agree that these plays serve to entertain before being instructional. Bernth Lindfors, referring to Nigerian popular literature, holds that

... these germs of literature sparkle with humour and drip with sentiment. Whether they conclude happily or unhappily there is usually a morale appended at the end for the audience's edification. From these plays a great deal can be learned about contemporary social problems and human values in urban and rural Nigeria.⁷

His comments apply to Cameroon as well. The didactic character of Anglophone popular plays bears resemblance to the traditional oral tale. Like the oral tale, drama is a verbal art and is socially conditioned. In order to fully appreciate Anglophone Cameroonian popular plays, they must be seen within their cultural, historical, and symbolic contexts. Since drama combines both the visual and the oral, it is accordingly an effective weapon in educating for an immediate end.

In trying to express himself, the Anglophone Cameroonian popular playwright searches for certain forms which can best accommodate the diverse reality which he is seeking to express. It would seem that his oral tradition provides the best forms for the expression of his numerous experiences. The borrowing and re-shaping of traditional forms is evident in the plot, themes and structure of some Anglophone Cameroonian plays. The story-telling art is a form which is frequently employed.

Thomas Gwangwa'a uses this art form in a way that transforms the protagonist into a story-teller. In *Our Cousin* (1988) the standard opening formula of a welcome greeting to the audience, an introduction to the subject matter, followed by the unfolding of the drama shape the production. Beegbro is the narrator in *Our Cousin*. He is as central to the action of this play as Pamela, the narrator, in *Seminal Dregs*. The narrative voices of Beegbro and Pamela are sustained till the end of both plays. The story-telling atmosphere is maintained and the playwrights strive to maintain as many of the formal conventions of the art as it is practised in the folk culture.

6 Michael Etherton, "The Dilemma of a Popular Playwright" in *African Literature Today* n° 8. London: Heinemann, 1976.

7 Bernth Lindfors, *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*. New York: African Publishing Company, 1979, p. 131.

Anglophone popular plays make use of the full range of traditional theatre elements such as dances and songs, which are blended to create loose but still theatrically appealing dramatic structures, through the extensive use of improvisations. The songs are meant to complement certain aspects of the story and perform very useful structural functions. In *Njema* (1984), the songs help to maintain the mood generated by the action, while serving as a moral lesson reiterating the need for young girls to confide in their parents. Such plays are popular in that they meet the expectations of their audience. Our interest lies not in its literary quality but in its dynamic creativity and in its success as a theatrical event.

The most prominent structural pattern in these popular plays by Musinga is the making and breaking of friendships. In this structural frame the movement is usually from friendship to enmity. This simple structure is characteristic of oral tales, especially the trickster tales. The violation of the terms of a contract between two parties is usually the source of conflict. This is what obtains in Stephen Jikong's *I Did So Swear But ...* (1985) and Albert Waingeh's *Who Well* (1988). This is also the structure of Musinga's plays *Lady Ojoko* (1983) and *Friend* (1982). The structure of these popular plays follows the pattern of the oral tale: friendship - contract - violation - discovery - end of friendship.

The simplicity of the plots of most of these popular plays gives them a parable-like nature which is mostly attributed to the folktale. Spectacular coincidences are characteristic of the action of these plays and fantastic inevitability is frequent. Both are elements which are peculiar to oral narratives, and which account for the lightheartedness of the popular plays.

As Stephen Arnold has observed of popular theatre, there is no dividing line between actors and spectators, as such the Cameroonian audience identifies itself wholly with the illusion of reality with which it is confronted."⁸ Audience participation in popular performances is determined by the oral nature of their popular culture. This is reflected in their tolerance and welcoming of repetitions and their spontaneous responses to rhetorical questions in the play. The audience participates in choral singing in response to actors during a performance. The song, which is sometimes part of the plot, is usually introduced by the leading actor, while the choral response enables the audience to participate actively in the event. Song and dance are also used by the actors in the transition from one episode to another.

Language is still being held as one of the obstacles in the way of popular appreciation of our emergent literary drama. One must realize that the current practice of writing in European languages does not allow a true reflection of the realities of the African

⁸ Stephen Arnold, "A comparative review of the career and Aesthetics of actor Musinga Cameroon's most popular playwright", *African Theatre Review* 1, 2 (Yaounde, 1986) p. 84.

continent. Indigenous languages on their part are too restricted to enjoy the same range which the metropolitan languages have. Therefore the Cameroonian writer is in search of a tongue that will combine the attributes of the two groups of languages without sharing their weaknesses. There needs to be a rapid expansion in the use of Pidgin, the language which is understood by all Anglophone Cameroonians. This option has not found favour amongst elitist playwrights, who claim that the language promises very little as a literary medium. Pidgin is only sprinkled in some of the literary plays as a character pointer. They also use this language to give colour and create humour, but rarely do elitist playwrights use the language as a primary medium, like some of the more popular playwrights do.

For instance, Nlinde's mother in Victor Epie'Ngome *Not The Name* (1985) responds to her husband's loud call as she protests:

Na who don die? Ewange you go make man fall for banda with this kind call weh you like for call man. I de talk you no de hear. (3)

In Musinga's *The Cup* (1978, ms.), the palm-wine seller says:

Massa Zawo, no forget my debt today, remember all the monies you owe me for palm wine and beef na 1.250 francs, me na you go wear one trouser. (1)

In D.T. Menget's *The Confession* (1980, ms.), the reverend father must resort to Pidgin in order to make clear his demand for church contribution:

All christian no pay contribution, some lef am church. My good friends you must be careful. Satan i bi too powerful. Many people de sin, dem tell lie, them steal, fornicate and them envy. Them deny for pay church contribution and some church people run away from God.

Even the European priest realizes the far-reaching effect of the use of Pidgin in his evangelic preaching. Language thus is one of the reasons for the ambivalent reception of some of our literary dramas and their distance from a popular projection. The literary playwrights have not sufficiently clarified the issue of their audience or the publics for whom they write. A popular literary drama will emerge only if, and when, there is a conscious wish for its emergence. Despite the fact that Anglophone Cameroonian drama came to light only in the late fifties, with the emergence of playwrights such as Sankie Maimo and later Victor Musinga, it now seems to dominate Cameroon poetry and the novel. Because of the communal and public nature of drama, coupled with the fact that it is a performing rather than a literary art, drama has tended to appeal more to Cameroonians than the other genres.

The existence of television in the country has increased theatrical activities. An increasing number of Anglophone plays are being aired on Cameroon Television, while the radio also broadcasts plays by Anglophone dramatists. As drama seems to be the best format for the communication of matters relating to development, and since popular

theatre is a dramatic expression in consonance with the aspirations of the ordinary man, such aspirations will best be propagated through the media which supposedly reaches a wider audience at a particular time of transmission.

Anglophone popular drama on radio, television and on stage has shown its most potent technique to be humour and empathy, as Eyoh says, "many skilled writers exist who have developed the knack of displaying society laughing at itself even within those areas considered taboo."⁹

The most fertile of such taboos lingered for a long time on sex and also on female related issues. It was taboo for a decent woman to expose herself through acting. This reduced female participation in the theatre in the early sixties. Also the kind of roles attributed to female characters in the plays made women shy away from performances because actresses suffered prejudices from society, which could hardly differentiate role-playing from reality.

Today, women have become aware of the irrelevance of these taboos and societal opinion and are playing quite challenging roles in performances. Today, married women make some of the best performers in some theatre companies such as The Flame Players.

The issue of what language is best for our literature has continued to plague linguists, writers and critics. Though Pidgin is the most widely used language in Cameroon, it is not taken as seriously as it should be. Playwrights are left to use their discretion in choosing a suitable language for their dramatic performances. It is regrettable that Pidgin, a language full of images, colour, and flavour is being despised by Anglophone elites. It is hoped, however, that when this language is given its full recognition through the process of standardization, more playwrights will feel comfortable in using it as the main medium of expression.

It suffices to conclude here that technical excellence is not the ultimate goal of popular playwrights, rather the emphasis has been on communication and relevance in terms of thematic content. Popular Anglophone drama may "... appeal to the informed taste of the critics who happen to come to theatre criticism through training in the dramatic literatures of Europe",¹⁰ but it has become a tradition in its own right, appealing to the ordinary man on the street. For the literary drama to reach out to wider audiences, more effort needs to be made in touring these plays throughout the country, since these plays also sharply and movingly reflect the concerns of the urban and rural masses.

9 Hansel Eyoh, "Theatre, Television and Development: A case for the third world", in Robert Elenstein (ed.). *Theatre and Television*. Amsterdam International Theatre Bookshop, 1980, p. 249.

10 Siga Asanga, "The State of Criticism in Cameroon Drama and Theatre", in Bole Butake, Doho Gilbert (eds.). *Cameroon Theatre*. Yaounde: BET & Co (Pub.) Ltd., 1988, p. 29.

V

ORAL TRADITION IN LITERATURE



Traditional Musicians in Bamenda

The Orality of the Works of Four Anglophone Writers: Linus Asong, Bole Butake, Bongasu Kishani, Fale Wache

S.A. Ambanasom

In their well-researched but very provocative and controversial book entitled *Toward The Decolonization of African Literature*, the Nigerian triumvirate of Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike uphold the view that contemporary African Literature has been dominated by creative writers and critics brought up on the "disorienting Euromodernist sensibility involving imported imagery and attitude; that for this literature to be truly decolonized African writers and critics should sever ties with those espousing not only pseudo-universalism but also individualist obscurantism and "Hopkinsian syntactic joggery"¹ and draw instead from, and be inspired by, the rich technical resources of African oral tradition from which a veritable Afro-centric sensibility can be nurtured. There are many African writers already doing what Chinweizu and his colleagues have recommended, drawing on the rich African heritage encompassing African thought, experience, folklore and myth, custom and religion to give their work a flavour and coloration that is essentially African.² Some of these writers are Chinua Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, Mazisi Kunene, Gabriel Okara, Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka, Okot p'Bitek; and in Anglophone Cameroon Linus Asong, Bole Butake, Bongasu Kishani, Fale Wache, among others. In this paper I will be concerned with the examination of elements of oral literature in some of the works of the last four of the abovementioned writers. My aim is to demonstrate not only the presence and effective use of these oral features but also the relevance of the works in which they feature.

According to Tala Kashim, orature can "be defined as a work of art expressed in carefully selected language irrespective of whether it is spoken, sung or chanted, and which deals with the thoughts, concepts, and ideas of an individual or a people. Thus whenever an individual expresses his joys and sorrows through language effectively, orature can be said to be in the making".³ Orature is used for such functions as praising, mourning, moral instruction and entertainment, and characterised by creativity, beauty and emotion.

1 Chinweizu et. als., *Toward The Decolonization of African Literature*, p. 175.

2 Adrian Roscoe, *Mother is Gold*, p. 249.

3 Ibrahim Kashim Tala, *Orature: A Research Guide*, p. 3.

Scholars and researchers collecting, transcribing, translating or analysing African orature have established elements integral to it. Among many of the features are proverbs, invocations or prayers, parallel phrasing, repetition, onomatopoeia, alliteration, songs, chants, praise names, choral responses. A proverb is generally defined as a brief epigrammatic saying that has become a popular aphorism or an axiom. However, not all axioms, maxims or aphorisms are pure proverbs. The test for the true proverb is its generalizeability, that is, a real proverb can be, and usually is, applied to situations other than the apparent context of its coinage. The authentic proverbs are more figurative than factual, more metaphorical than matter-of-fact.

Two examples of epigrams from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* will serve to illustrate the point.

1. He who brings kola brings life.
2. ... If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.⁴

The first statement is not a proverb. It is literal and factual because it makes more sense only when uttered during an actual kola-nut-eating occasion than when there is no kola nut eating at all. On the other hand, the second statement is a proverb. It contains a metaphor and the proverb's full meaning usually lies beyond the actual context of eating; it makes more sense only when applied in a context where there is no actual washing of hands and eating going on. For example, it could mean, as it certainly does in the context of *Things Fall Apart*, that if a young person works hard he or she can attain a position of respectability, just as Okonkwo has done.

Depending on the degree of its distinctiveness or environmental coloration, a proverb can be said to be either traditional or universal.⁵ The more environmentally colourful it is, the more traditional; the more colourless it is, the more universal. Of the four Anglophone writers, the works of Bole Butake and Linus Asong reveal the presence of this important feature of orature. From Asong's *The Crown of Thorns*⁶, there are the following proverbs:

1. ... When a hen leaves the incubator, it must be chased far out of the house if the house-keeper does not want to step on warm excrement. (p. 98)
2. ... A calabash should never have anything to do with a stone, because whether it is the calabash which hits the stone or it is the stone that hits the calabash, it is the calabash that breaks. (p. 112)
3. When a man goes to the latrine without something with which to clean his anus he can do many wrong things. (p. 118)
4. ...the tree which falls and touches the ground is the tree that grows alone. (p. 137)

4 For the two statements, see Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 5 and 6 respectively.

5 See Nancy Schmidt, "Nigerian Fiction and the African Oral Tradition", p. 13.

6 Asong Linus Tongwo, *The Crown of Thorns*. Limbe: Cosmos Educational Publishers, 1990.

5. It was not our fault that he left so many dried leaves lying so close to the fire of Nkokonoko Small Monje. (p. 194)

These are only a few of the proverbs found in that novel. They highlight in their various ways some of the issues raised in the novel. And the context here shows the conflict between the administration and the people of Small Monje, which eventually leads to a break-down of communication. Proverbs 1 to 4 thus relate to the strained relationship between Chief Nchindia and his people, while proverb five points to that between the irrational D.O. and the very people. The proverbs then serve a thematic function within the context of the novel.

At another level they serve to delineate character, for all the proverbs are uttered by members of the Council of Elders in Small Monje, indicating their wisdom, age and maturity. The proverbs carry some environmental coloration, serving as a defining parametre of a unique cultural milieu. They are therefore not just "mere relics of a primitive culture"⁷. If we grant this supposition, then many other things fall in place; then the speech styles and linguistic peculiarities of the Nweh-Mundani that the novel deals with (though not explicitly referred to as such) fall in place; then their behaviour is normal and defensible. Herein lie both the proverbs' artistic function and the novel's artistic truthfulness.

From Bole Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, we have the following proverbs⁸:

1. ... The cockroach does not call a fowl to a wrestling match. (p. 10)
2. The gorilla can do nothing to an iroko tree. (p. 10)
3. The stream never flows uphill. The Leopard and the goat have never been bed-fellows. (p. 14)
4. The louse and the jigger have no need for brains. (p. 18)
5. The Leopard does not wrestle with a goat. (p. 19)
6. The rat does not play with a cat. (p. 10)
7. The lion announces its presence with roaring. (p. 38)
8. The leopard prowls among the goats, and they scatter into the dark night! (p. 38)
9. The lion spreads terror among the cattle and the sheep! (p. 38)
10. When the elephant flaps his ears and sounds his trumpet, the forest is in disarray for he has gone berserk! (p. 38)
11. The eagle flies and flies but always returns home! (p. 42)
12. The prowling lion comes back to its den for rest!
13. After devastating the forest the elephant goes down to the river for a drink! (p. 42)
14. The farmer spent all day in the fields but returned home at dusk and went to sleep! (p. 42)

7 Chidi Ikonne, *Chaakpii: A Study Of Igbo Folktales*, Preface p. iii.

8 Bole Butake, *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*. Yaounde: SOPECAM, 1990.

Most of the proverbs are full of animal metaphors with all that is implied in the animal's brute force, intelligence, smartness, or parasitism. In proverb 1 the voice warns Shey Ngong of his foolhardiness in attempting to argue with the great ruler of Ewawa. But in proverb 2, it is Shey Ngong who asserts his superiority vis-a-vis the Fon, and in proverb 3, the Chief Priest affirms the impossibility of his ever bowing down to the traditional ruler. Shey Ngong is a spiritual leader, the Chief Priest of Nyombom. He is therefore spiritually and morally superior to the corrupt Fon of Ewawa, and can justifiably claim to be the Leopard and the cat. By contrast, the parasitic stooges and bootlickers who surround the Fon are no more than jiggers and lice who have not much need for brains.

In a general way, proverbs 1 to 6 underscore the basic conflict between the Chief Priest and the Fon. They point to the moral superiority of the former over the latter. They are therefore thematically functional. On the one hand, the string of proverbs from 7 to 10 comprises multiple metaphors chanted by Shey Ngong as a prelude to Kibaranko's outing and activities, giving the audience a hint of the violent nature of such activities. For, in the words of Nalova Lyonga, Kibaranko is "the spiritual force that wipes out tyranny."⁹ On the other hand, the other string of proverbs, 11-14, also comprising multiple metaphors are equally chanted by Shey Ngong. This time they are chanted in preparation for the return of Kibaranko after his hectic activities. They point to peace after violence; calm after turbulence; rest after a hard day's work.

As in Asong's *The Crown Of Thorns*, the proverbs in *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* are uttered by elderly responsible people. Shey Ngong is a man of high spiritual status in the society. It is fitting that he should speak in proverbs which, with the metaphors they embody, help to underscore the second and more important level of meaning of this play. They help to highlight its allegorical nature for, in the Cameroonian context, the play is a political allegory, a literary form in which objects, persons, and actions have meanings that lie outside the story itself. That is, the play dramatizes a political reality in the guise of another. And as such much of its "deep structure" meaning resides in these metaphors; hence their effective use.

With regard to invocations, Bongasu Kishani's *Konglanjo*, and Bole Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* and *Lake God* will serve as examples. The world they depict is essentially traditional, one wherein the old spiritual order is still very much in place, for the ancestors, the living and the unborn are part of the cyclic trinity, with the revered ancestors and the deities still exerting tremendous force on the living, acting as their guardians and protectors. The living worship them and perform rituals for them;

9 This quote is from Nalova Lyonga's review of *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, in an undated document advertising the staging of the play by the Yaounde University Theatre.

sacrifices and libations become a communication link that keeps the living, the dead and the unborn in communion.

With reference to *Konglanjo*,¹⁰ there is Ngaa-Mbom, Owner of Creation, the Maker of All, placed unapproachably far up there, not to be bothered by petty details of daily existence. Ngaa-Mbom's worshippers constantly pray to Him and occasionally catalogue a list of blessings and favours that they want Him to bestow on them. They ask Him to ward off evil omen from their midst, to provide them peace, to enlighten their traditional doctors. They want Him to provide them with good and abundant harvests, to give them strength, long life and prosperity, and to make their children perpetuate their culture. Examples of invocation in *Konglanjo* are many. Indeed, the whole poem is essentially invocatory. The people not only invoke Ngaa-Mbom, but also their ancestors and their heralds.

Ngaa-Mbom!
May we espy and cry shame on whoever mocks you!
May our foes be ignorant of our woes!
May we sow and reap in folds of eight hundreds;
May we grow strong - May we prosper.
May the good-hearted live long
Within the rhythms of the seasons
May the evil-doer and the warrior miss their way!
May we build on the epitaphs of ancestral feats!
May the realms of our households never dwindle
under our feet!
May our offspring hunt for game of therapeutic inspirations
From the upper stream-forests to the lower stream forests;
From the hillside forests on our left
To the hillside forests on our right!
May echoes of our lineage name toll and spread
beyond years issuing from the echoes and rhythms
of these festal Manjong gongs! (ku-ngu-ngung!)! (pp. 14-15)

In Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* invocation and libation are performed by Shey Ngong, the Chief Priest of Nyombom, a deity similar to Kishani's Ngaa-Mbom, while in *Lake God*¹¹ these rituals are carried out by Shey Tanto, leader of the Kwifon:

10 Bongasu-Tanla Kishani, *Konglanjo*. Yaounde: University of Yaounde, 1988.

11 Bole Butake, *Lake God*. Yaounde: Bet & Co. (Pub) Ltd., 1986.

Shey Tanto:

Hii-i-i Wong! Hii-i-i Bo-Nyo ! Hii-i-i Kwifon!
Here present are the seven pillars of Kwifon.
Here present are the seven corners of the land.
We cannot give food and drink to our illustrious ancestors.
We cannot even gain access to the sanctuary of Kwifon.
Hii-i-i Wong! Hii-i-i Bo-Nyo! Hii-i-i Kwifon!
Here present are the seven pillars of Kwifon.
Here present are the seven corners of the land.
We cannot grease the sacred pot of the land.
It is now six years since we last saw the pot.
And Kwifon has been exiled from the land.
Hii-i-i Wong! Hii-i-i Bo-Nyo! Hii-i-i Kwifon!
We are met in this sacred grove of the Lake God
Because the land is no longer the land
You illustrious ancestors handed over to us.
Kwifon is in exile; and the women of this land
Are waging war against their men-folk
Because the Fon, our Fon, the Fon you gave us;
The Fon we thought you gave us, has sold the land.
The Fon has banished Kwifon and given the land
To strangers and rearers of cattle.
And now the women starve their men.
Hii-i-i Wong! Hii-i-i Bo-Nyo! Hii-i-i Kwifon!
Here is drink for you gods!
Here is drink for you ancestors!
Give us patience.
Give us peace of mind.
Show us the right path.
That we may bring peace again
To this land which you gave us. (pp. 56-57)

From *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, we have:

Shey Ngong:

Oh! Nyombom!
Creator and guardian of the land,
And you our illustrious forebears,
Grant me strength and wisdom
To weather the surging storm.
The Fon has lost vision.
The noble men and elders of this land
Now listen only to the inner voice
Of greed and fear of a man who has
Surrounded himself with listeners
And watch-dogs to do his bidding.
Nyombom and you, ancestors,
Grant me strength and wisdom
Grant me patience and love ... (pp. 11-12)

In these extracts of invocation some of the central issues of the works are raised. In the case of Butake's dramas the central issues generating the dramatic tension are almost literally stated in the invocation, indicating thus the obvious dramatic function of the invocatory appeal.

Other utterances of different rhythmic patterns are also features of orature. They are embodied in devices like parallel phrasing, repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia and apostrophe, contributing to the overall lyricism of the poem. They are found mostly in Kishani's title poem and Fale Wache's *Lament of a Mother*.¹² The device of parallel phrasing consists of the repetition of certain words while the rest of the structure slightly varies; that is, it embodies variable and invariable components as in the following examples from *Lament of A Mother*:

Thirty long years since you left us
Thirty long years you've been away from us. (p. 1)
Ten years since you left us
Ten years since you've been away (p. 3)
My eyes itch to see ...
My ears yearn ...
My hands long ...
My back hungers ... (p. 4)

In the first of these three extracts the repeated parts of the sentences are "Thirty long years", while the remaining portions are variable ones; in the second extract the invariable units are "Ten years since ...", while the rest are the variable ones; and in the last excerpt the repetition is the possessive pronoun "My", while the variable but parallel phrases are preceded by parts of the body: eyes, ears, hands and back. Sometimes the repetition of the name Ndikochong takes on the added quality of a refrain or, at times, an apostrophe:

"Ndikochong, my son, my husband"
...
"Ndikochong my son is it you?"
...
"Ndikochong come back." (pp. 1-2)

- all of this brought in at reasonable intervals. The immediate effect of all this is emphasis, persuasion, conviction, for they help to lend force to Bokwi's appeal to her son to return home after thirty years of absence.

With regard to onomatopoeia, Fale Wache accurately captures the natural sounds produced by various weapons, as revealed by the quoted speech of the fiery freedom fighter, Nyamsai:

12 Fale Wache, *Lament of A Mother*. 1990.

"The pointed-end of the spear: F-i-a-p.
The poisoned arrow: z-i-i-m
The honed matchet: K-o-u-p
The barrel of the gun: BOUM" (p. 30)

The overall effect of all these devices of onomatopoeia, repetition, parallel phrasing and apostrophe, including the use of words intrinsically musical, is enchanting lyricism, wonderful music. And this contributes greatly to our interest in the poem, enhancing its readability.

The poem is more than a literal lament of a mother over the absence of her son. The purported lament, incorporating as it does some qualities of orature, is actually only a vehicle employed by the poet to make scathing comments on the quality of life experienced by Africans in general and Cameroonians in particular during the colonial and neocolonial periods. In the process of developing his subject Wache reveals an attitude, a temperament and images emerging from an essentially African matrix of values. The worth of this poem rests not only on what the poet has said but also on how he has said it; in other words the poem's strength resides in both its matter and manner.

With reference to Kishani's *Konglanjo*, the whole poem bristles with influences of African orature. As Siga Asanga rightly comments, the poem explores Nso mythology, legend, and ritual to bring out an Afro-centric perspective.¹³ When people pray seriously and earnestly, they exploit techniques of eloquence for the purpose of persuasion; they pray with intensity of feeling, as demonstrated in *Konglanjo*. He has made use of devices of African oral poetic eloquence to compose a poem that is strongly rhythmical, readable and euphonious. These poetic devices lend force and conviction to the community's appeal to the supernatural forces.

As for parallel phrasing, examples abound. Two examples suffice, and the first comes from the section dealing with an address to the youth, Wa'bin:

Wa'bin!
Youth of every land! Youth of every time!
As if with the trappings of our royal wine-calabashes
We cease not to harness and oil your pumpkin-jaws!
As if invited by a drummer's voice
We dance our dance of age to the sway of time's tunes
To open the footpath of your dance
And spellbind you to rattle the cymbals of your fashion
And live the way our fuzzy forerunners live!
Not in vain do we keep unfolding these secret rites
Of the first spider-legged weeks we store still
With seasons of sunshines and rainfalls on those ledges of years

13 Siga Asanga, "Konglanjo - Spears Of Love Without Ill-Fortune: Poems - Bongasu Tanla Kishani". *Abbia* 38-39-40 (1982), p. 406.

Whence we stem like a stream from its source!
 Whence we stem like corn-grains from corn-cobs!
 Whence we stem like forests from the soil!
 Whence we stem like a knife from its handle!
 Whence we stem like rain from the sky!
 Whence we stem like a road from a homestead!
 Whence we breathe forth like life from our veins!
 Not in vain do we bequeen
 and name our daughter, *Ntang*,
In commemoration -
Yes in commemoration
 of the first hammock-bridge
 of our first crossing away from parent homesteads! (p. 20)

It is easy to spot in this extract the fixed and the invariable components. The parallel phrases emphasize, through the accumulated similes and the marked regular rhythm, the natural coming, the spread and the movement of the people from their places of origin. The second example comes from the appeal to the youth to name, write down and praise things, lands, times and peoples:

The first to have carved
 The first wooden doors and hearthposts!
 The first to have boiled
 The first medicine-plants in the first medicine-pots
 The first to have translated
 The first biddings of an earth-spider!
 The first to have sent and deciphered
 The first to have harkened to the first voice of kola nut parings!
 The first message with porcupine-quills! (p. 22)

Again, the repetitions are the phrase "The first to have" and "The first", while the main verbs and most of the longer utterances differ from line to line.

Each complete thought consists of two lines, the short and the long, with the thought-units having more or less the same rhythm. A basic principle of parallelism is at work here. It holds that similarity in form leads to easy identification of similarity in content and function, that is, the main verbs and their objects, in the quoted lines carry equal weight and are of equal importance. In essence this means that the events and activities referred to are of equal historical significance.

The poet equally makes use of alliteration as seen in the appeal to the elders in section seven:

Taanto' take!
 Let this wine strengthen you to guide every incomer!
 Ngaywir take!
 Let this bloodstained feather bear testimony to our sacrifice!

Taamfu' take!
 Let the sound of your drums
 and tusks assemble the Fon's people!
 Taangwa' take!
 Let our Mbokam game yield
 To the wishes of your spears and dogs!
 Taamanjong take!
 May you continue to lead our manjong standard-bearers!
 Taawonle take!
 May you open the ears of young folks to new things
 Yeewonle take!
 May you blow life into the children you name! (pp. 23-24)

There is the recurrent consonant /t/ present in initial positions. There is the alternation of short, stout lines with long cadenced ones, reinforcing one another and stressing what the celebrants want to put across. This powerful rhythm lends energy and urgency to their appeal, an alluring lyricism which gives the poem the mellifluous quality I spoke of earlier.

Apart from this particular music that emerges from the peculiar ordering and arrangement of the lines just quoted, there is more obvious music, italicised and worked into the poem. This is found most often in section 4, at the end of section 6, in the middle and at the end of section 7, at the beginning and at the end of section 8. It is music played in conjunction with such instruments as flutes, drums, and gongs. Here the poet also makes use of onomatopoeia as he successfully captures on paper the natural sounds made by these musical instruments. For the flute it is *fee fee!*; for the drum, *ti-nding! ti-nding!*; for the gong, *ki-ning! ki-ning* and *ku-ning, ku-ning*.

Thus the whole invocation, the supplicatory utterance, is recited in conjunction with musical instruments, giving the poem a powerful emotional unity, which is often an integral aspect of an effective oral performance.

Incantations are often made use of in oral literature. According to Tala Kashim, "An incantation is a curse or spell recited as part of a ritual and addressed to supernatural forces".¹⁴ I can add that an incantation is also an utterance sung, chanted or recited as if it were a formula, a relatively fixed utterance that takes on a monotonous, mechanical aspect. An example of incantation of the type that relates to a curse is Earth-Goddess' pronouncement in *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*:

The ground trembles in the valleys.
 The ground trembles where the streams flow.
 The ground trembles where the palms grow.
 The ground trembles! (p. 30)

14 Ibrahim Kashim Tala, *An Introduction to Cameroon Oral Literature*. 1984, p. 20.

The curse remains;
The plague remains;
The pot is whole;
The calabash is whole.
The plague remains. (p. 33)

From Kishani's *Konglanjo*, there is another example of incantation contained in the prayer to the heralds in which the celebrants mechanically chant out:

Let our children's children's children's children---
Let our mother's mother's mother's mother ---
Let our father's father's father's father---
Let our parents' children's children's children---
Let our ancestral parents' parents' parents---
Let Le' and Jing, nay, the last born of this second---
Re-echo our feats and failures up and down
Time's sun and rain within the planets
Be ye gods or humans! (p. 30)

The whole quotation is a periodic sentence wherein the celebrants' complete thought is delayed until the end of the utterance, until the arrival of the main verb "re-echo". In this parallel structure one notices the regular rhythm - the flow of lines of more or less equal rhythmic value - that betrays some monotony and repetitiveness typical of utterances churned out by rote.

Another device of oral literature is apostrophe, addressing or calling on someone absent or a supernatural authority as though he or she were present. The technique is evident throughout *Konglanjo*, especially in the sections addressed to Ngaa-Mbom, Wa'bin, the heralds and the ancestors. Often the names precede the appeals but, at times, the appeals are punctuated with the names. The effect conveyed is that of intimacy, drama and urgency.

Other features of orature like songs and chants, choral responses and praise names are also worked into Butake's plays (*And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, 21-22; *Lake God*, 30, 32 etc.) With regard to praise names the women in *Lake God* refer to Fon Joseph as the lion, the leopard, and the elephant; in *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* the ruler of Ewawa is also metaphorically called the sun, the elephant, and the lion. However, these praise names are used ironically. In the context of the plays and in the view of those calling these names, the two rulers have not given any positive account of the attributes incarnated in these animal metaphors. Thus Fon Joseph is the lion whose hunger must be assuaged at the expense of the people. He is the leopard "who pounces on his kind just to prove he is a leopard". He is the elephant "that will trample on the shrubs in the forest while pretending to pull down the baobab" (*Lake God*, 18). In *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, Kwengong uses praise names to refer to the ruler of Ewawa only to announce his death.

He is the the sun that has set, the elephant that has fallen, and the lion that is no more.
(45)

Conclusion

How relevant to our contemporary history are the issues treated in the works of these writers?

Asong's *The Crown of Thorns* treats the theme of the lack of genuine dialogue between the administration and the ruled. The two camps are at loggerheads, and they talk at cross-purposes. The local people have serious complaints to lay before the government regarding issues crucial to their material and spiritual life, but the government, through the Divisional Officer, adopts a rather contemptuous attitude towards them. The D.O. behaves as if the people's views and feelings do not count at all engendering thus an impasse, a break-down of communication with the disastrous consequences registered at the end of the novel. Can we learn anything from there?

Wache's *Lament of A Mother* is an artistic review of Africa's unflattering social, political and historical experiences from the colonial period through political independence to the present-day. It is a litany of woes, tribulations, frustrations, disappointments and disillusionment. The poem deals with the bamboozling of the masses not only by foreigners but, more tragically, by their own brothers. Can any issue be more topical?

In a similar vein Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* deals with dictatorial rule in a local Fandom; with wreckless leadership; the encouragement of mediocrity and hedonism, squandermania, etc. Thanks to its allegorical nature, the play is just as current as some headlines in our local dailies. One need only effect the necessary shift from one level of meaning to the other for a fuller appreciation. Can any play be more relevant?

All of this points to the commitment of the authors as "writers in politics",¹⁵ and in their politics they show great concern for the welfare of their society; they are on the side of the downtrodden. In this regard Bongasu Kishani would seem to be in a category all alone. Bate Besong once said that Kishani in *Konglanjo* does not treat contemporary concerns in the manner of a committed artist to give his readers a sense of moral direction.¹⁶

While agreeing with Bate Besong, it is necessary to point out that the concerns in Kishani's *Konglanjo* will remain a source of inspiration for the youth on whom the society depends for cultural continuity. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too ...¹⁷ Let there be room for everybody in this triangle of ours.

15 The phrase is the title of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Writers in Politics*.

16 Bate Besong, "Bongasu Tanla Kishani As Cantor and Mystagogue" in *Cameroon Life* 1, 5 (Oct. 1990).

17 "Let the Kite perch ..." is part of a proverb from *Things Fall Apart*, p. 14.

By thus drinking deeply from the Cameroonian pool of oral tradition for inspiration, these Anglophone writers are undoubtedly making an essential contribution to African and World literature.

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Oral Traditions in Literary Imagination: The Case of Spirit Possession in Bole Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*

Nol Alembong

Introduction

Of recent, Cameroonian playwrights and theatre practitioners have greatly experimented with such aspects of their oral traditions as orchestration, masquerading, song and dance. These have featured most prominently in the works of Bole Butake, Gilbert Doho and Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh. None of these playwrights has, however, employed spirit possession as a dramatic device the way Butake has done in his most recent play *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*.¹

The aim of this paper is to highlight spirit possession in Bole Butake's *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* in view of establishing its relevance to the thematic concerns of the play, to character conception as well as show how its use helps foster the concept of African cosmological systems.

Spirit possession is "a form of trance in which the behaviour actions of a person are interpreted as evidence of a control of his behaviour by a spirit normally external to him".² This phenomenon is manifested in two ways, namely, in a trance and in what E.G. Parrinder calls "mediumistic possession".³ With regard to the former, a spirit is believed to possess a human being occasioning a rapture of the conscience. The entranced person finds himself in an ecstatic state characterized by dissociation, automatisms and involuntary utterances.

Writing about this phenomenon among the Kalabari of the eastern Niger Delta in Nigeria, Robin Horton informs us that

... inducing [or mediumistic] possession means compelling a god to take over control of a man's body from his own *teme*.⁴ A new personality temporarily guides his

1 Bole Butake, *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*. Yaounde: SOPECAM, 1990.

2 Reymond Firth, "Problems and Assumptions in an Anthropological Study of Religion", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 89, 2 (1959), pp. 129-148.

3 E.G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*. London: Sheldon Press, 1962, p. 103.

4 In Kalabari world-view the universe is made up of two great orders of existence: that of *oju* (the bodily or material) and that of *teme* (the spiritual or immaterial).

behaviour; and when his own *teme* returns to control, it naturally enough knows nothing of what happened in its absence.⁵

Mbiti tells us that mediums, who are often women, are attached to medicine men or diviners and that "under that possession she may jump about, beat herself, bang her head, walk on fire and thorns, and do other things which she would not do when in her normal self".⁶ Mediums generally impersonate the type of god they represent and have their special regalia to suit their respective roles.

Spirit Possession and Thematic Development

The core of the play relates to a repressive system of governance and unrealistic thinking, a system characterized by the misuse of power, injustice, corruption and wanton greed. In these circumstances Butake dwells on the idea of liberation, for the play is a dramatization of the efforts of the people of Ewawa to free themselves from tyranny. The Fon, the ruler of the land of Ewawa, is the incarnation of this odious system.

Gwei's trance is a very effective vent, dramatically speaking, through which these ideas show their ugly heads. Gwei's presence off-stage and his entry into the sacred grove of Nyombom are followed by his swift allusion to the unjustified incarceration and liquidation of Nsangong (and his announcement of the Fon's decision to destroy the sacred grove). Gwei's pronouncements are couched in provocative language and a jolting tone, laying bare the nauseating system that such an upstart represents:

<i>Voice: (off-stage)</i>	Shey Ngong? Shey Ngong? Have you heard what happened to your friend? The rat does not play with the cat.
<i>Shey Ngong:</i>	Who is the rat, you knave? (<i>signalling Tapper to get into Kibaranko mask</i>). Come inside and say your proverb.
<i>Gwei: (making entrance)</i>	A messenger does not receive the blows meant for the sender of the message. The Fon has sworn to sack your grove. (<i>making for the gourd by the sacred pot</i>) Let me have a little wine ... (<i>Kibaranko begins to rumble</i>) What's that? (pp. 33-34)

Gwei's rapturous disposition soon gives way to a state of macabre obfuscation triggered by the weird rumbling and keening of Kibaranko and Earth-goddess. The playwright tells us in the stage directions that "Gwei tries to flee but discovers that he cannot move" (p. 34). This marks the beginning of Gwei's trance. The terse and sullen conversation between Shey Ngong, the Chief Priest, and the entranced Gwei reveals poignantly the machiavellianism of the Fon and his accomplices:

5 Robin Horton, *The Gods as Guests*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1960, p. 49.

6 John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*. London: Heinemann, 1975, p. 156.

Shey Ngong: ... What happened to Nsangong?
Gwei: It was not me, Holy One ... I mean, Shey!
Shey Ngong: Yet you were quick to bring me the news. Have you heard what happened to your friend? The rat does not play with the cat. Talk!
Gwei: I swear by Kibaranko that it was not me. (*Kibaranko rumbles furiously*) I mean, I swear by the gods, by Earth-goddess. (*Earth-goddess keens furiously*)
Shey Ngong: You see how you perjure yourself? How do people disappear in this land? Where do you keep them?
Gwei: They are taken to Ekpang, Shey.
Shey Ngong: The bad bush?
Gwei: Yes, the bad bush.
Shey Ngong: And killed? You kill people in the bad bush on behalf of the Fon?
Gwei: Very often it is the notables who order. Especially Nformi Nyam and Nformi Eleme.
Shey Ngong: For what crimes? What are their crimes that you take their lives?
Gwei: For talking ill of the Fon or his notables. (pp. 36-37)

The above conversation reveals the extent to which power can be misused. Fear looms large in the minds of the people of Ewawa, a land where one dares not criticize the ruler for fear of death. Such a system of governance encourages praise-singing and muffles constructive criticism. People cower at the very thought of the ruler, for their lips must not betray the tidings of their minds. Surprisingly, a parvenu like Gwei obeys the Fon, sings his praises and kills people on his behalf not out of fear, as he claims (pp. 35-36), but for some gain. He has a palm-bush and his wife a farm-land which the Fon had seized from other people.

Ironically it is Gwei, one of the Fon's watch-dogs, who confirms the Fon's totalitarian rule and epicurean habits. We know, however, that Gwei wouldn't have uttered what in official circles would be considered libel if he were not entranced. The trance therefore is dramatically effective because it enables Gwei to disclose the Fon's insidious mannerisms. The ensuing conversation between him and the Chief Priest of Nyombom speaks for itself:

Shey Ngong: Let the Fon come and sack the grove! Let him come and ...
 He has drunk wine until it has gone into his head.
Gwei: That is true, Holy one! The Fon is drunk.

Shey Ngong:

If he hears that your head will fall.

Gwei:

In private, Shey! I said it in private, Holy One! Everybody says the Fon is mad. But in private. (pp. 34-35)

Literally, the Fon is dazed because of much drinking. Metaphorically, however, the playwright is using a rare dramatic situation - alcoholism - to show the extent to which power intoxicates. The more one thirsts for power, the more it corrupts for, to borrow from Bernard Fonlon, "power is a heady wine and so sweet, in fact, that few have been known to lay it down willingly."⁷ The Fon, as revealed through Gwei's experience, is more inclined to the abuse than the use of power, to inordinateness than to moderation - "Everybody says the Fon is mad"; he is thirsty for flattery, resentful of criticism and gets drunk with authority.

In addition to Gwei's trance, Butake uses mediums to record his vision of society. This is evident in Shey Ngong's induction of the Kibaranko spirit and the Earth-goddess to take control of the Tapper and Kwengong respectively.

The first instance of such an induction, or mediumistic possession, is vividly presented to good effect:

Shey Ngong: (indicating spot next to sacred pot)

Stand here! (*Tapper obeys while Shey Ngong busies himself with preparations for Kibaranko's sortie*)

Kwo'o! Kwo'o!

The lion announces its presence with roaring!

(*Tapper begins to rumble*) The dog does not eat because he is hungry!

The leopard prowls among the goats,
And they scatter into the dark night!

(*Scoops potion from sacred pot and makes rumbling Tapper to drink, after which he becomes more agitated, ending in frenzy and howling*)

The lion spreads terror among the cattle and sheep!

(*Tapper enters mask of Kibaranko*)

When the elephant flaps his ears and sounds his trumpet

The forest is in disarray for he has gone berserk! (*howling Kibaranko exits in terrifying frenzy*). (p. 38)

It is by degrees that Shey Ngong implores the Kibaranko spirit to take control of the Tapper. In the process the Chief Priest prepares the medium for his cleansing mission, an assignment that entails the destruction of the old order - reminiscent of the mission entrusted to the prophet Jeremiah by the Lord God:

See, I have this day set you over
the nations and over the kingdoms,

7 Bernard Fonlon, *The Task of Today*. Victoria: Cameroon Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., 1966, p. 16.

To root out and to pull down,
To destroy and to throw down ...⁸

To enable the Tapper perform this role with the desired results, the Chief Priest not only implores the Kibaranko spirit to take control of him but he puts into him, as it were, the souls of such fear-inspiring and havoc-causing animals like the lion, the dog, the leopard and the elephant. Having been so armed with the instruments of destruction, the Tapper, in the Kibaranko mask, makes his sortie. The target is the Palace, where the Fon and his henchmen while away the hours in various fits of wine-inspired vociferation, as insinuated by the Messenger: "The Fon and the notables of the land were all drunk, in various degrees." (p. 40)

Through the Kibaranko, Butake drives home, with a rare artistic skill, the message which is central to this play, namely that we must make war on frivolity and tyranny. The palace retainer even testifies to this:

Messenger:

You send Kibaranko out without restrainers? He is devastating the palace. Imagine, Shey! All palm-wine calabashes and pots broken and scattered in the courtyard. The whole place is smelling of palm-wine. (p. 40)

and, later, he tells us

... we were all in various stages of drunkenness when suddenly we heard the howling of Kibaranko and saw the Fon's wives and children running in total confusion and fear. That was the signal for each man to save his head. The Fon staggered from the throne and fell. When he saw that the notables were all running he cried for assistance. 'Save me from his wrath or I am dead! Save me, I say!' (pp. 40-41)

Although two of the notables, Nformi Nyam and Nformi Eleme, succeed in taking the Fon to safety, it is only a moment's respite, for the Earth-goddess is there to finalize his undoing. Butake's second medium, Kwengong (now Earth-goddess), commands the Fon, calling him by his personal name, to come out of his hiding place:

Chila Kintasi! Chila Kintasi!
Come out and receive the wares
The women over whom you wield
Great power have sent you!
Come out! I say!
And receive the goods sent by
them you dishonour so! (pp. 46-47)

⁸ *The Holy Bible: Jeremiah 1:10.*

And when the Fon does come out he is presented with the sacred pot containing the "fruits they urged me feed the crocodile that swallows its own eggs" (p. 47). The Fon's refusal to drink the contents of the pot triggers off his own ritual death:

Die and deliver the land from the Abominations of
drunkenness and gluttony!

(The Fon begins to reel until he collapses)

Die! Chila Kintasi, die!

And save the land from merry-making!

Die! Fon. So that we may think.

The people need your death to think!

Die! Die! Die! *(Fon lies still)* (p. 48)

Earth-goddess is therefore used by the playwright as a fatal instrument for the Fon's undoing. The death of the Fon marks the end of the era of the misuse of power, injustice, corruption and wanton greed. Conversely, his death symbolizes a new dawn for the people of Ewawa, a return to reason and to a system of collective governance.

Character Conception

Bole Butake, like many an African writer, broadens the base of his characters through mythification and symbolism. In this regard character portrayal in *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* is typically Soyinkian, that is, reminiscent of Wole Soyinka's conception of characters to function on both the human and spiritual levels. Kwengong is both human (she is one of Shey Ngong's wives) and divine (she is Earth-goddess). Similarly, we see the Tapper as a human being, taking part in human affairs, but also as a spirit incarnate, Kibaranko, the spirit of destruction.

Indeed, Kibaranko is reminiscent of Esu, the Yoruba god of fate, mischief and the unpredictable. There is even a striking resemblance between Butake's Shey Ngong and Soyinka's Ogun. Butake makes Shey Ngong, the Chief-Priest, humanly and mythically resonant. He is the impersonation of the people's legitimate aspirations - their will not only to survive but to come out clean in the face of a corrupt, inhuman and morally decadent society. Conversely, the responsibilities of a Chief Priest elevate him to the mythical plane, making him a divinely inspired mentor for mephistophelean humanity. And, at the same time, he is a character of messianic proportions, divining and causing the destruction of the diabolical, dissipated and despicable ruler - the Fon. On this score, Shey Ngong is reminiscent of Soyinka's Ogun, god of exploration and artistic skill but also of war and all its insensate slaughter. The duality of Butake's Shey Ngong therefore matches that of Soyinka's Ogun.

Characterization in Butake's play, as in African literary imagination in general, is conceived in such a way as

... to partake of the special nature of the traditional culture, especially the status and professional definition of individuals, the organic nature of family and community relationships, the religious and mystical interpretation of character traits through such phenomena as relationship with tutelary deities, possession by a deity or spirit, and the imputations to particular people of witchcraft and extraordinary psychic powers.⁹

These factors are clues to the understanding of the human psyche. In a similar vein, they enable us establish what Mircea Eliade calls "the union of heaven and earth",¹⁰ the relationship, so to speak, between supernatural forces and human beings within the cosmic continuum.

Spirit Possession and Mediumship as Indices of African Cosmological Systems

The setting of *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*, the stage properties and the pronouncements of the characters all lend credence to the fact that

The ecological imperatives of the African continent have made it possible for the African people to develop thought-systems that describe their world in a common language of common symbols.¹¹

The play is set in Ewawa, an imaginary highland clan in Cameroon. The actions per se take place in a grove considered a sanctum by votaries of the gods of the land. There are incessant reports from the palace, however, of the activities of the clan head (the Fon) and his henchmen. These reports are dramatically significant in that the activities of the Fon go a long way to complement those of the Chief Priest (the keeper of the sacred grove) as well as confirm the fears of the latter of an imminent danger to which the clan is exposed as a result of the excesses of the former. Determined to salvage the clan, the Chief Priest resorts to spirit possession and mediumship as detergents to cleanse Ewawa, to purge it, so to speak, of the canker that undermines its very existence. In this regard, and in view of the concordance of events, one can infer that African thought-systems emphasize the three worlds of African cosmology, namely, that of man, heavenly bodies, (the sun, the moon and the pleiades) and deities and spirits.

The play thus confirms that the earth is the centre of man's world. It is on earth that he lives and procreates. He tills the earth to live and the fauna in turn also guarantees his continuous existence. It is man's duty therefore not only to protect the earth but to show respect for it. This is evident in the rites of aversion and avoidance (as well as fertility

9 Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 101.

10 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York: Princeton University Press, 1954, p. 23.

11 Mazisi Kunene, "The Relevance of African Cosmological Systems to African Literature Today", *African Literature Today* 11 (1980), p. 191.

rites) performed by Shey Ngong. Human society, however, is hierarchically structured - with the Chief (or Fon, as in the play) at the apex and the Palace as the focal point of temporal authority. Shey Ngong is asked at the beginning of the play "Where are you going to when all roads are leading to the palace?" (p. 9). Later he is told that for challenging the Fon to a wrestling match, "the lion of Ewawa has pronounced that the farm-lands of your revered wives now belong to Kibanya's wives" (p. 18). The palace and the Fon (the lion of Ewawa) symbolize the highest order in human society. The palace is where the Fon reigns supreme, for he is metaphorically referred to as "the lion of Ewawa". The epithet is reminiscent of the lion's position in the animal kingdom. Notables come next, in a descending order, followed by commoners among whom are untitled men, women and children. So, in addition to protecting the earth, man seeks to maintain not only the social order but to foster a healthy relationship among its inhabitants.

It is in this light that one has to see Kibaranko's mission. Earth-goddess is the final arbiter in the conflict between the Chief Priest, whose "obligation is to the gods of the land" (p. 10) and the Fon, who takes "pleasure in desecrating their gods" (p. 18), a Fon who permits himself to decorate the least deserving citizen with the highest honour in the land, the "red feather", a Fon who seizes the farm-lands of women whose husbands dare raise a voice of dissent in the land and a Fon on whose behalf people are secretly liquidated. And because of these and other excesses, Earth-goddess decides to put an end to the life of "the crocodile that swallows its own eggs" (p. 47) so that the land can be delivered from the "Abominations of drunkenness and gluttony" (p. 48). Therefore the playwright makes use of spirit possession and mediumship as theatrical devices to underscore the need to protect man's home and his sustainer, the earth.

The second world is the sky, the abode of the sun, the moon and the stars. The chief of these heavenly bodies is the sun "that strides magistral in the sky" (p. 14). Earthgoddess tells us:

The sun shines on the hills
The sun shines in the valleys
The sun shines in the depths of the streams
The sun shines. (pp. 19-20)

The pronouncement emphasizes the omnipresence of the sun in the human kingdom and underscores its relationship with the earth. This relationship is tutelary (for the sun intervenes in the human world to check the excesses of man) and functional (for sunlight fosters life in the world of men, animals and plants). It is in the light of a tutelar relationship with the earth, however, that one appreciates the pronouncement of Earth-goddess. The judgement contained therein is a devastating drought in Ewawa as a result of the Fon's transgression of the laws of the land. The implementation of this judgement

can only be forestalled by the death of Chila Kintasi, the man during whose reign as Fon, Ewawa has seen the worst of things happen. For Ewawa to avoid the drought, therefore, Chila Kintasi must yield not only to the people but to the dictates of their extraterritorial forces as well.

In terms of its relationship with the earth, the third world - that of deities and spirits - functions more or less like the second. This world of the supernatural is represented in the play by the sacred grove of Nyombom. Nyombom, whose grove Shey Ngong keeps, is the supreme deity of Ewawa. His true nature is hard to conceive, given that no mask is made to represent him. All we know is that he is "creator and guardian of the land" (p. 11). Conversely, Kwengong and the Tapper are the articulate incarnations of Earth-goddess, and the Kibaranko spirit respectively. They are not only represented by human beings but by masks. Masquerading, then, can be seen as man's attempt to grapple with the problem of the physiognomy of gods, for, as Andrew Horn has rightly observed,

Man, as a material being in a material world, fears what he perceives as immaterial, for it cannot be contained or dominated. His defensive impulse is to concretize, to make the invisible visible, the infinite finite, and the superhuman human. It is this last, the tendency to anthropomorphize, which generates the idea of gods.¹²

The sacred grove of Nyombom is a concretization of man's imagination of the divine realm. Its implantation on earth and its sustenance by homo sapiens are vivid testimonies of man's perpetual communion with his gods.

The play reveals that in Africa gods cannot be approached directly. One needs to pass through intermediaries. Shey Ngong, the chief priest of Nyombom, is one of such intermediaries. The priest is duty-bound to represent his god faithfully. He is the visionary of the people and, on this score, he is a diligent observer of the society and he warns when he notices that man's actions may jeopardize his very existence. This is the role Shey Ngong plays. He calls the Fon and the notables to order when he realizes that they had institutionalized injustice, bribery, corruption, hatred, wanton greed and an epicurean way of life. When the latter fail to heed to the call, he turns to the gods for help. It is thanks to divine intervention, therefore, that the main perpetrator of these crimes is destroyed and the society brought back to sanity. The play therefore bears testimony to the fact that in Africa man is answerable to the gods for his acts on earth (since the earth is the Supreme Being's creation) and that

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.¹³

12 Andrew Horn, "Ritual, Drama and the Theatrical: The Case of Bori Spirit Mediumship", in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed.), *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981, p. 183.

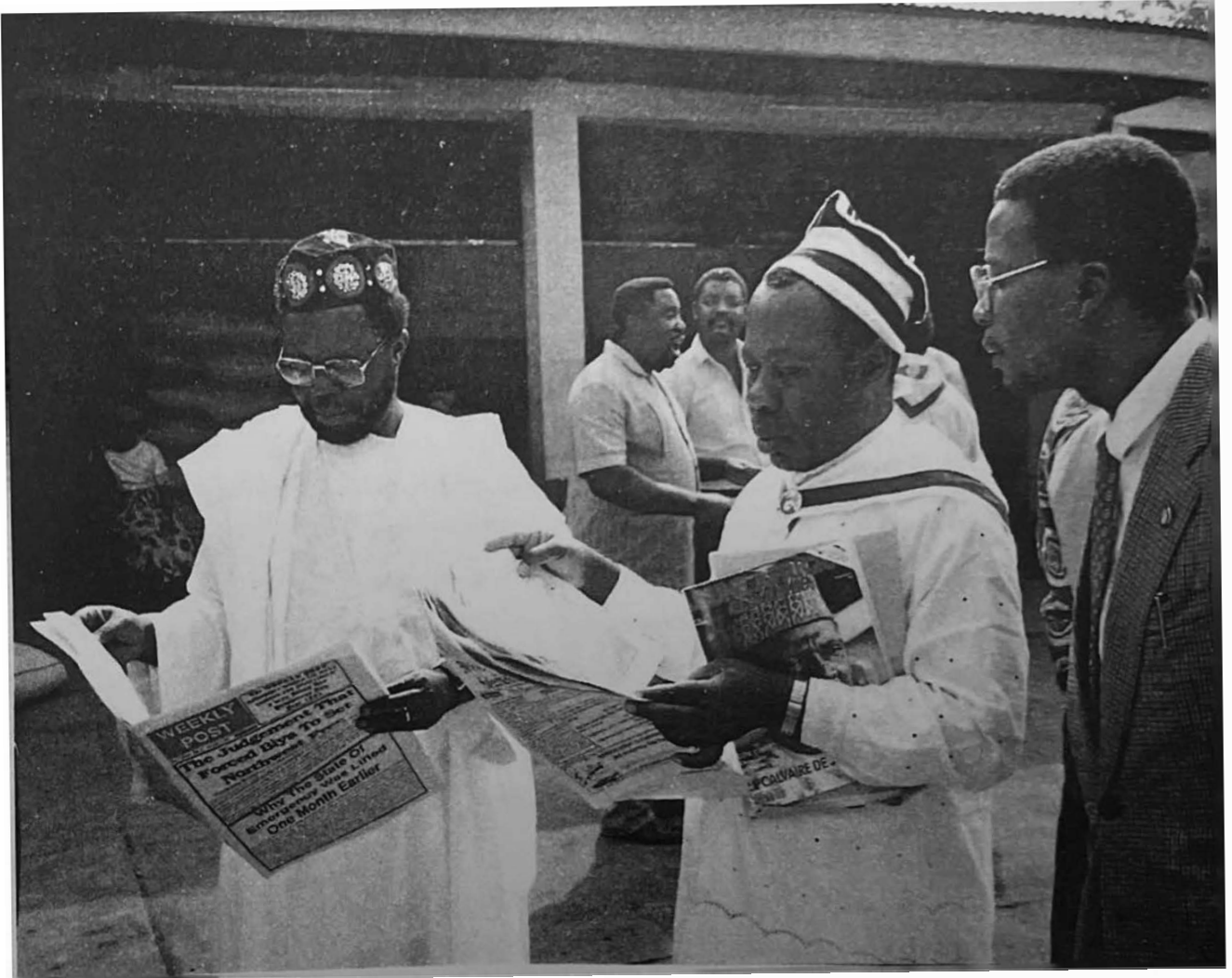
13 Shakespeare, *King Lear*. Act V, Sc. III, 170-171.

Conclusion

The above analysis on the use of spirit possession in Butake's play bears testimony to the fact that a writer should not and, indeed, should never seek to celebrate aspects of his oral tradition for their own sake. The extensive and rich repertory of our oral traditions should be used as a springboard to literary awareness. The sole rationale underlining a writer's drawing on his oral tradition should be to create an effective medium of communication. On this score, various aspects of oral tradition used in a given work help establish a common ground of understanding and shared knowledge between the writer and his audience. The audience therefore becomes an integral part of the creative act, as in the case of an oral performance, because such an audience can easily discern the relevance of textual materials drawn from the people's oral tradition.



VI
THE ROLE OF THE PRESS



The Press for an informed society

The Role of the Newspapers in the Democratic Process in Cameroon

Godfrey B. Tangwa

Newspapers have played a very important role in the ongoing democratic process in Cameroon. Literacy is indispensable to democracy in the modern world. Some of our pre-literate traditional communities were highly democratic, thanks only to their relatively small size and highly developed hierarchical political structure incorporating an efficient and institutionalized system of feedback and checks and balances.

The most important thing about democracy is the free flow of ideas, information and knowledge, without which choice (individual and collective) would be meaningless or, at any rate, greatly handicapped. And, without genuine choice, we cannot talk of democracy. A democracy is a system in which people choose, *inter alia*, their leaders / rulers while reserving the inalienable right to change those leaders / rulers whenever they no longer seem to serve their collective interests. Awareness and information are necessary for making correct or wise choices. Such information and awareness are got through various instruments of mass communication, among which newspapers occupy a prominent place.

A fairly credible democratic system already flourished in West (Anglophone) Cameroon before independence and after independence and reunification up to around 1966 when the one-party system of government was imposed on the Federal Republic of Cameroon by Ahmadou Ahidjo. Such newspapers as *Cameroon Outlook*, *Cameroon Times*, circulated in West Cameroon and served as vehicles of information, education, entertainment, expression of conflicting ideas, criticism of public institutions, projects and personalities.

But with the imposition of the one-party system in 1966 and, especially, the unitary state in 1972, the vibrancy of the newspapers slowly petered out and some of the newspapers even disappeared altogether. A monolithic dictatorship of the most repressive kind henceforth held uncontested sway all over what had by now been baptised "The United Republic of Cameroon". It became a treasonable offence to criticize the political leadership in no matter how veiled or tangential a manner. The sacred duty of all media of mass communication - the press, radio and television (when it started in 1985) - became the transmission of government communiqués, propaganda, chanting the praises of the one-party political leadership and general entertainment. Deviation from this hallowed path involved incalculable risks. Among the newspapers which doggedly took

such risks could be mentioned: *Le Messager*, *L'Effort Camerounais* (a Catholic tabloid), *Cameroon Outlook*, *Cameroon Post*.

By 1990, most Cameroonians, especially Anglophones, were already so fed up with repressive dictatorship, economic exploitation and executive kleptocracy that they were more prepared to risk death for the reinstatement of democracy. The collapse of the communist dictatorships of Eastern Europe and what has generally been termed "the wind from the East" came in very good time to bolster the pro-democracy feelings and give a fillip to pro-democracy movements in the Republic of Cameroon.

At first the regime seriously resisted the pro-democracy stirrings, whisperings and murmurings. It mobilized ministers, parasitic businessmen, chiefs and militants of the one party to dance on the streets condemning "precipitated democracy". Any pro-democracy demonstrations were ruthlessly dispersed with tear-gas, guns and hand-grenades. But the regime soon realized that it was swimming against a strong current and tactically decided to change its strategy. It decided to profess democracy and take control of the process so as to guide it more safely away from its natural goal. In this way it hoped to master and control the whisperings before they turned into a scream, to bring the gentle breeze under control before it turned into a hurricane.

A real breakthrough for the pro-democracy movement came with the defiant launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in Bamenda on 26th May, 1990 against a background of massive troop deployment, general official blackmail and intimidation. The leader of this defiant action, which drew thousands of Cameroonians ready to die for democracy to the Ntarikon Park of the Bamenda metropolis was John Fru Ndi, a bookseller. The launching itself went on without incident. But, as the mammoth crowds were dispersing, government troops opened fire, killing six young people and wounding several others.

Thereafter, the entire government media, including Radio, Television and the Press were mobilized in a campaign of carefully fabricated, barely credible lies to cover up the regime's atrocities and embarrassment. They shamelessly and repeatedly asserted that the six people shot in Bamenda were stampeded to death by the crowd of which they were a part; that thousands of Nigerians had crossed the borders to take part in the rally launching the SDF; that John Fru Ndi had fled to Nigeria; that students at the University of Yaounde who manifested their support for the launching of the SDF were heard singing the Nigerian National Anthem.

The launching of the SDF and its aftermath marked the turning point in the democratic struggle in Cameroon. The proliferation of independent newspapers picked up from this event. Cameroonians were simply fed up with government high-handedness, repressive terror and bold mendacity. More and more people became willing to take risks in openly opposing the regime. One accurate index of the change in the political situation was an

explosion in the circulation of privately owned anti-government newspapers. As for the official media, it has continued resolutely in its propagandistic mendacity until today when its overall boss, Augustin Kontchou Koumegni, Minister of Communication and so-called "government spokesman", is internationally well known as a most shameless and unblinking liar.

Today, one can count about 60 newspaper titles in circulation in Cameroon. They can roughly be divided into three groups: those which are extremely *anti* the Biya regime, those which are extremely *pro* the regime and those which consciously try to steer a middle course or whose mercenary policy makes them waver unclearly between the two extremes. Among the first group can be listed the *Messenger* group (Pius Njawe), the *Challenge* group (Benjamin Zebaze), the *Expression* group (Severin Tchounkeu) the *Cameroon Post* group (Paddy Mbawa / Augustin Ngalim) and the *SDF Echo* (which developed out of the SDF party Newsletter). It is the newspapers in this first category that have usually been subjected to the most savage government censorship, seizures and bannings.

The middle-of-the-roaders would include such titles as *Dikalo*, *Le Combattant*, *L'Ami du Peuple*, *Weekly Post*, *The Herald*, etc. These usually enjoy uninterrupted publication and thus appear on the newsstands with credible regularity and punctuality.

The extremely pro-government newspapers include, *Le Democrate*, *Le Patriote*, *Le Témoin*, *Le Journal de Douala*, *Aurore* and, of course, *Cameroon Tribune*. These enjoy government patronage, if not financial subvention, and can be confidently hawked on the streets by vendors without any fear of being arrested and / or brutalized by the punching arm of the regime - the police (both in and out of uniform). Vendors have usually had to conceal papers of the first category above inside those of this category and only bring them out after a conspiratorial signal from the buyer.

Columnists and essayists have played a very significant role in reawakening the consciousness of Cameroonians to the democratic process and to democratic and liberal values. Apart from sensational headlines, columnists and essayists have been the other factors responsible for the wide circulation of newspapers. Among the most notable essayists can be mentioned the following: Jing Thomas Ayah, Francis Wache, Tande Dibussi, George Ngwane, Bate Besong, Charlie Ndi Chia, Sam Nuvala Fonkem, Martin K. Jumbam, C.P.N. Vewessee, among others.

As for the columnists, three very regular columns have gained extreme popularity. These include "The Gospel" by Hilary Kebila Fokum (*Le Messenger*), "The Wanderer" or "Le Promeneur" in the French edition (*Le Messenger*), and "No Trifling Matter" by Rotcod Gobata (*Cameroon Post*). "The Gospel" is a hard-hitting and consistently anti-Biya, anti-"new deal" column. Occasionally, it has come under the self-censorship of the paper's management itself. Formulated as a chat between the two "friends", Takala and

Muyenga, "The Wanderer" is basically a grape-vine and gossip column with a keen ear for sensitive rumours. Most of its insinuations and predictions usually turn out to be true. "No Trifling Matter", which has become compulsive reading for most of the readership of *Cameroon Post*, is a highly critical menu, occasionally spiced with uncontainable humour, whose forte is plain, simple logic.

All the newspapers in Cameroon today are thriving on the long-drawn-out democratic struggle either as champions of *change* or as defenders of the *status quo*. It cannot be easily predicted what the course of their evolution might be if the much contested democratic transformation were to occur today.

VII
ANGLOPHONE WRITING AND THE DEMOCRATIC
PROCESS

ROUND TABLE I



Sankie Maimo and Hansel Eyoh



Bate Besong, Babila Mutia, Buma Kor

Victor Musinga



Bole Butake
(photo: Fridolin Furger)



Language, Literature, Cultural Identity: alternative views about marginalisation

Eckhard Breitinger

I want to make a few remarks about language, literature, politics and cultural identity, which might at first sight appear disjointed, but which nevertheless bear on the predicament of Anglophone Cameroon Writing. My remarks are partly in the form of statements, but since these statements refer originally to wider or other contexts than the Cameroonian situation, they are meant to raise questions about the specificity of the Anglophone Cameroonian situation with the intention of pointing into the direction of a much needed specification and clarification of issues and positions.

1. Let me begin with a quotation from Vargas Llosa's novel *El hablador* (1987, *The Storyteller*). Vargas Llosa, who was also a candidate in the last presidential elections in Peru, very aptly describes in that novel the fluid concepts of centres and peripheries in multi-ethnic Peru. Writing his story in metropolitan Florence - the heart of ancient culture - Vargas Llosa's narrator looks at what appears to him now as peripheral Lima, recalling his student days, when he and his friend Mascarita reached out from what appeared to them then as metropolitan Lima into the rainforest of the Amazon basin, where the Machiguengas live. Geographically, socially, politically, culturally these Machiguengas were - even for the sympathetic anthropology students from Lima - as marginal as ever any group or region or culture could be. And yet, this marginal, isolated, dispersed people had its own focal point, its own cultural centre: its literature.

These storytellers crisscrossed the impenetrable rainforests east of Cuzco and Madre de Dios. They covered enormous distances, travelling for weeks and months, carrying with them their stories to the widely dispersed Machiguengas. They gathered new stories while on their way, they reminded the isolated clans that other clans were living; that, in spite of the great distances and the dense forests that separated them, they formed one community that shared a common tradition, a common history, common beliefs, common ancestors, that they shared misfortunes and happiness, aspirations and hopes. These storytellers, who used the most simple and oldest means of human communication - narration - formed the connecting link that fused the Machiguengas into one community, one unified people of interrelated and interdependent human beings that made them capable of solidarity action (p. 112).

After having unravelled the mysterious story of his Jewish friend Saúl Zuratas, nicknamed Mascarita (the masked one) who had abandoned his marginalised position as a Jew in the Creol-Hispanic American society and switched over into the camp of another marginal cultural group to become one of the famous *habladores* or storytellers among the Machiguengas, Vargas Llosa re-emphasises once again on the final page of his novel the importance of a living literary tradition for the cultural identity of any group, however marginalised:

At a time, when the grandes in Florence were scheming against each other or constructing their fabulous palazzi, these storytellers were roaming the rainforests of my country. The anecdotes, the lies, the inventions, the gossip, the news and the jokes which they carried from one clan to the next, which they replenished and polished and modified, transformed this people of widely dispersed groups into a community with a strong conviction of a common destiny, a spirit of belonging and of being tied together as brothers and sisters. (286)

Vargas Llosa's *El hablador* is concerned with interculturality and intertextuality, with narrativity - be it written or oral - and with cultural identity of marginalised societies. The Jew Saúl Zuratas / Mascarita who starts off as an anthropological researcher among the Machiguengas and ends up as a storyteller, i.e. the incorporation of the Machiguengas' cultural identity, represents one level of interculturality. The narrator, who tells the story during a study leave in Florence, Italy, views his Hispanic-creole identity in relation to his Italian environment on the one hand and his native American identity on the other and, thus, represents a second level of interculturality. Vargas Llosa employs various narrative voices that are fused into one unified voice and split up again into culturally distinct and separate voices. The Occidental narrative voice from its Italian Renaissance environment relates intertextually to Dante, the Spanish Golden Age writers and the *Conquistadores*, but also to his formulaic journalese, which he adopted as producer of one of the most popular cultural television programmes. The Oriental (Jewish) / Native narrator relates intertextually to the Biblical (oral) tradition and to Franz Kafka's tale *The Metamorphosis*, which is highly symbolic in this particular context. The narrative voice of *el hablador* himself often becomes hardly distinguishable from the voice of Tasurinchí, the original founding father, cultural hero, narrator and prophet of the Machiguengas. Not only does the storyteller (modern) swap his narrative voice with the hero of his own narration, but even appears to swap identity and actually becomes Tasurinchí, when he - or is it Tasurinchí himself? - is telling the creation myth about the contest between the sun and the moon or about the origin of the Machiguengas. Relating literary creativity to indigenous and exogeneous textual traditions is, however, only one aspect of what Vargas Llosa narrates about the essence of cultural identity. What he emphasises very strongly is that the cultural identity of any

group is never a finished product but a process. Cultural identity is not something that can be prescribed or decreed from above as *littérature patriotique* or literature of national unity. Literature - and cultural identity for that matter - is, according to Vargas Llosa, something that is continuously recreated in a dialogue between *el hablador*, the storyteller and his audience. He tells his stories and listens to theirs, he gives his versions and collects theirs, thus collecting material for new stories from his audience. He re-shapes, remodels, re-creates what he has gleaned from his audience; he feeds back his newly acquired tales into the audience, absorbs their response and re-shapes his tales again. The creative process is, thus, conceived of as a continuous give-and-take among equal partners, a highly democratic process in which the whole community is involved on all levels.

2. The year 1789 saw the publication of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa Written by himself*. This is the life story of a young Nigerian who was kidnapped in his Igbo village, deported as a slave to the West Indies, sold to Georgia, pressed into the British Navy and finally managed to buy his freedom in Britain. At the time of its publication, Equiano's autobiography was one of the major texts of the British anti-slavery movement. In recent years, Equiano has invariably been claimed as the founding father of African-American Literature, of Black British Literature, of West Indian Literature and, of course, of Nigerian Literature in English. What is significant about Equiano's autobiography is that in the last quarter of the 18th century, English had obviously become already an international medium for literary expression that was held to be capable of expressing adequately experiences and attitudes arising from different cultural contexts and, in particular, of describing situations of cultural contact or cultural clashes as in the cases of the colonial and Slave-Trade situations. The post-colonial critical debate of the 70s and 80s, with the urge to define a historical long-ranging tradition, rediscovered Equiano as the original text of diverse cultural-historical traditions and appeared also to assume a longstanding international usage of the English language. This is even more significant because the English language had already acquired a much wider usage when, during the Romantic period, the concepts of National Culture, National Literature and National Language were conceived and propagated. This concept dominated the critical discourse about literature henceforth. The German philosopher, educationist, politician Wilhelm von Humboldt published his seminal essay on the identity of "Weltanschauung", national culture and national language in 1820 (*Über das vergleichende Sprachstudium in Beziehung auf die verschiedenen Epochen der Sprachentwicklung*).

Two hundred years after the publication of Equiano's autobiography, the de-nationalisation or internationalisation of English as a medium of literary expression is an

obvious fact that can no longer be ignored. The Rushdie affair is a clear indication for the prevalence of intercultural English literature over national literature. A look at the Booker Prize winners - and even more so when looking at the names of short-listed authors for the Booker Prize - reveals that authors with English as a second language or, at least, authors with a post-colonial background have built up an increasingly strong presence in English letters.

A key representative for this newly discovered, but long existing "polyphony" in English literature is the 1992 Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott from St. Lucia. The first language in Derek Walcott's native island is French Creole, the second language is English Creole; the educated class would use West Indian Standard English on formal occasions and somebody like Walcott, who has a regional and foreign university education in English and French literatures and in Classics, also commands the international literary and academic Standard English. Derek Walcott prides himself on his multiple heritage, on being a bastard, on descending from an Ashanti grandfather, but also claims Warwickshire and Flemish ancestry. Walcott's cultural background is such that he naturally merges the African descent oral tradition of the animal stories, the orature descent narrative tradition of the classical Greek and Roman Epics, and the Great Tradition not only of English, French, American, but also Russian literature. From this Caribbean background Walcott has coined a transcultural image of the *condition humaine*, the image of *The Castaway*, of Robinson Crusoe, not as a colonial explorer or conqueror, but as a displaced person who has to adjust to his environment mentally and linguistically. Within the linguistic continuum of variants of different "Englishes", Walcott easily commands a range of new literary idioms capable of carrying the specificity of local or regional settings as well as the universality of the *condition humaine* of his castaway or his Omeros.

The Congolese Writer Sony Labou Tansi defines his relation to the French language in which he writes in terms of violation and retaliation:

J'écris en français parce que c'est dans cette langue-là que moi-même j'ai été violé. Je me souviens de ma virginité. Et mes rapports avec la langue française sont des rapports de force majeure, oui, finalement. Il faut dire s'il y a du français et de moi quelqu'un qui soit en position de force, ce n'est pas le français, c'est moi. Je n'ai jamais eu recours au français, c'est lui qui a recours à moi. ("L'écrivain face à la polémique", in *L'enseignement des littératures Africaines à l'université*, Brazaville, 1981, pp. 65/66)

The writer's relation to his linguistic literary medium, which Sony Labou Tansi describes and which also applies to the two previously cited authors, Equiano and Derek Walcott, is peculiar to colonial and post-colonial literatures. While the writers from the West, who set out to operate from the trinity of national language, national culture, national

literature are practically born into the language which they will use, the post-colonial writer has to make a conscious decision on which language to write in. The European writer has practically no choice; the post-colonial writer certainly does not have an entirely free choice, but there is a definite element of voluntarism, as Sony Labou Tansi has made clear, that defines the relationship between the writer and his linguistic medium. The European writer can only write in, and from within, his national language; the post-colonial writer writes "with" the European language: language has become merely a tool, a convenience that has been purified emotionally by leaving aside all the national or ethnic connotations which the language of the colonial masters might have carried in the past. Like the literary forms, for example the novel form, language can be utilised as a vehicle that carries new, other, non-mother-country messages or emotions. Walcott's range of variants of "Englishes" has its correspondence in the African setting, where "Englishes" range from the "transliterations" of African languages, from which speech patterns, images or structures peculiar to the "vernacular" are translated into English, through the varieties of Pidgins to Regional Standard Englishes.

3. Language as the sole denominator or determinant factor for the definition of national and cultural identity appears to be historically and geographically limited. It obviously has been a very powerful political instrument for a certain number - definitely not all - of the countries of the industrial North during the 19th and most of the 20th centuries (roughly 1820 to 1970). Before and after that period and outside the geographical areas of the European nation states the definition of national and cultural identities had to follow different lines, very often the key determinants were the retention of the dominant language, the rejection of the dominant culture and the assertion of cultural distinctness. African states in particular inherited these concepts of the nation state from their colonial masters. Many of them adopted the rhetoric and the ideology of national unity although they lacked some of the essential qualities of that particular concept of the nation state, namely, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity. Cameroon with its triple colonial heritage is a striking example. Here, a wide variety - ethnically, culturally and religiously different groups - appear to have redefined their identities according to their exposure to historical processes of foreign intervention as *Francophone*, *Anglophone* or *Northern*. But beyond that, there is another level of identification, that of national identity, of Cameroonian identity. It is not very clear, whether this is really a self-definition or rather a view of looking at oneself imposed on Cameroonians through the nation building and national unity rhetoric of their governments. Although government has set a whole team of intellectuals at work to design a national cultural policy and identity - as scholars like Ambroise Kom or Richard Bjornson have aptly shown - the essence of Cameroonness has remained vague. When one tries to define it contrastively -

Cameroonness as distinct from "Nigerianness", or "Gabonness", "Tchadness", "Centre Afriqueness" - one immediately falls back to the level of sectoral definitions like Anglo- and Francophone, Northern and Forest. The frequently given explanation of the historic unified *Kamerun* under German colonialism does not satisfy, nor does the national infatuation with *les lions indomptables*. Similarly, the concept of Anglophoneness appears to be defined mainly in its - assumed or / and real - opposition to the Francophone. And how much Cameroonness can be contained in Anglophoneness and vice versa, particularly when Francophoneness and Anglophoneness often seem almost incompatible? Is unification - the marriage of Cameroonness and Anglophoneness - only an unhappy marriage of convenience, as Weca's marriage to Garba in Epie'Ngome's *What God has Put Asunder*? What role do the Anglophone storytellers play? Do they - as Vargas Llosa described it of the *habladores* of the Machiguengas - create the spirit of togetherness and belonging, and if so, is the cultural identity thus defined by the writers one of Anglophoneness or Cameroonness or both?

Social (In)Justice as the Breeding-ground of Protest Writing

Bole Butake

Since this round-table conference is being held within the context of the Workshop on Anglophone Cameroon Writing, I will limit my discourse to Cameroon. I am taking it for granted that we know what democracy means even when we choose to call it "advanced democracy" while actually stifling and murdering the many faces that constitute the sum of democracy.

Essentially, however, democracy is a political system in which, through universal suffrage, the people choose their leaders by virtue of socio-economic proposals which will uplift the standard of living for the majority. In my opinion, democracy is most effective when there is freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of movement and, above all, where there exists social justice and equal opportunities for all.

My contention is that the absence of social justice and equal opportunities for all in Cameroon, and more especially for Anglophone Cameroonians, has given birth to protest writing which, to my mind, is the most remarkable feature of Anglophone Cameroon writing.

Historically, Cameroon was a German creation with the partitioning of Africa among European nations at the 1884/85 Berlin Conference. With the outbreak of the First World War and the subsequent defeat of Germany by the Allied Forces, Cameroon became a trust territory of the League of Nations on whose behalf Britain and France were mandated to administer the territory. Subsequently, for over forty years, the greater part of Cameroon became a French colony, while the most westerly strip of it was administered by the British as part of their much larger and very heavily populated Nigerian colony until 1960 when La République du Cameroun and Nigeria each gained independence.

In a plebiscite organized by the United Nations on February 11, 1961, the British Cameroons were to gain independence either by joining Nigeria or by reunifying with La République du Cameroun. Whereas the people of British Northern Cameroons opted for integration with Nigeria, British Southern Cameroons voted for reunification with La République du Cameroun which was duly consummated on October 1, 1961, in a federal bilingual Republic made up of the federated state of West Cameroon and the federated state of *Cameroun Oriental*, the former La République du Cameroun.

I should remark here that the reunification option in the 1961 plebiscite was facilitated by the very large colony of various ethnic groupings including Bamilekes, Bamouns, Bassas, Betis, Doualas, Mbos, who had escaped from their native lands under French oppression and the "*corvée*" or forced labour system to seek refuge in the liberal and democratically governed Southern Cameroons where they enjoyed equal opportunities on a competitive basis with the native Southern Cameroonians in all fields of public and private endeavour. And so, many of their offspring won government scholarships or sponsorship to pursue higher education beyond the frontier and, upon return, occupied decision- and even policy-making positions. It was mostly in this way that the sentimentality of reunification held sway (despite the raging war waged by the *maquisards* of the Union des Populations du Cameroun) over the logic of union with Nigeria which, over the years, had been compromised by the haughty Igbo traders who treated Southern Cameroonians like second-class citizens in their own native land.

By the time of reunification, then, Southern Cameroons, which assumed the appellation West Cameroon, was a society in which all the hallmarks of a democratic society were fully operative: a multi-party parliamentary system of government and a leader of the opposition; an independent judiciary; a civilized police force and, above all, a free and competitive press without any censorship injunctions. Therefore, so long as Ahidjo's government in Yaounde did not meddle with the internal affairs of West Cameroon, reunification was thought to be a success.

Unfortunately, the federal nature of the government necessitated the reorganization of administrative structures and the movement of personnel across the Mungo. Taking advantage of this, Ahidjo put in motion his machiavellian machine to stifle the government of West Cameroon and so bring about the dismantling of the democratic institutions that had been so well established. First, he extended his style of government by decree in East Cameroon to the state of West Cameroon. Next, he absorbed all revenue generating sectors of the West Cameroon government into the Federal Ministries. In this way John Ngu Foncha, the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, suddenly found that he had to depend on Federal Government subsidies to make his government function.

In the meantime, those civil servants who had been absorbed by the Federal Government suddenly found themselves receiving more than double the salaries previously paid by the West Cameroon government. The reaction of the other civil servants was, as expected, the spontaneous clamouring for equal salaries, or "harmonization", as it was popularly known. This constituted the demise of West Cameroon as a free democracy.

Thereafter, the institution of other East Cameroon structures was easy: the Federal Inspector, the Gendarmes, the BMMs and the secret police, censorship, the merging of

all political parties into one and, finally, the 1972 unitary state. The re-enslavement of the Southern Cameroonians had come full circle.

One might be tempted to posit that the injustices perpetrated against Anglophones by Ahidjo were not that glaring, especially when one considers the material benefits to civil servants. Yet, while the majority was blinded by financial reward, Bernard Fonlon was the lone, bold voice that protested against the inequitable society that Ahidjo was building. In such essays as *Shall we make or mar? The Task of Today, Under the Sign of the Rising Sun*, etc. Fonlon clearly casts doubt on the conduct of public affairs under Ahidjo. His most scathing remarks were contained in a memorandum entitled *Upon a Rock or Upon Sand?*¹ addressed to Ahidjo on behalf of the KNDP in which he lambasted the President for not respecting the reunification accord. After acquainting himself with the document, Ahidjo is reported to have told Fonlon "You must promise that this document does not see the light of day."² The fact that the memorandum was only published in 1989, several years after Ahidjo resigned from the office of President, and several years after Fonlon had left government, might be proof of Ahidjo's ruthlessness. This incident aside, Fonlon never abandoned the fight for a just, free, democratic and equitable society until his death.³

Another firebrand critic of injustice and corruption in the post-Reunification era was Patrick Tataw Obenson alias Ako-Aya. He was a newspaper columnist for *Cameroon Outlook* who never gave the spiritually decadent and the morally bankrupt any respite. No wonder that following his death, Ephraim Ngwafor has made the following remark: "Only Tataw Obenson could spit out really scathing pieces of satire, aimed directly at the highest governing authorities of his society."⁴

During Ahidjo's quarter-century tenure of office, his fairly good sense of judgement and moderation and high-handedness, all combined, gave the Anglophone a false sense of security and belonging. But with the accession of Paul Biya, and more especially after the April 1983 coup attempt, tribalism was instituted as a way of government; and so the Anglophones came to constitute the most marginalized "tribe" in Cameroon.

The "new deal" government's reaction to the Lake Nyos tragedy in 1986 was to become the standard towards the contesting Anglophones particularly from May 26, 1990, when Ni John Fru Ndi launched his party, the Social Democratic Front, in Bamenda.

1 Nalova Lyonga (ed.), *Socrates in Cameroon: The Life and Works of Bernard Nsokika Fonlon*. Yaounde / Leeds: Tortoise Books, 1989, pp. 127-146.

2 Conversation with Nalova Lyonga.

3 See *ABBLA* 38-39-40 (1982), Yaounde.

4 E. N. Ngwafor, *Ako-aya: An Anthology*. London: Institute of Third World Art and Literature, 1989, p. 209.

On the literary scene, the hopes raised by Biya's coming to power had soon been transformed into disillusionment and total frustration. *The Rape of Michelle, Lake God, The Survivors, And Palm-wine will Flow, The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie, Beasts of No Nation, Requiem for the Last Kaiser, What God has put Asunder, The Magic Fruit, The Inheritance, The Crown of Thorns, Mind Searching, Lament of a Mother, The Passing Wind, Partners in Prison, Obasinjom Warrior with Poems After Detention* and, more recently, *Born to Rule, Before this Time, Yesterday* and *Retributive Justice* are plays, novels and poetry collections in which the various authors are all very vocal about the zero degree of morality in the functioning of government, especially in relation to the plight of the Anglophone. Newspapers, too, have flourished, in spite of the censor's axe. In fact, it is in the columns of these newspapers and magazines that the anger of Anglophones has been most succinctly expressed. In this connection, Rotcod Gobata of *Cameroon Post* stands out as the most ascerbic columnist since Ako-Aya.

In conclusion, let me say that the characteristic bitterness exhibited in Anglophone writing is consequent upon the social injustices perpetrated against this linguistic and cultural group by Biya's "new deal."

Le Degré Zero ... Deconstructing Victimhood

Nalova Lyonga

The aim of my talk is to demonstrate that Anglophone Cameroon writers are concerned with deconstructing victimhood. As a result, Anglophone Literature has a distinctive character by addressing a particular section of the Cameroon people albeit within a national "universe of discourse" to use Richard Bjornson's¹ phrase which he defines in the following passage:

A universe of discourse refers to the rules, procedures, assumptions, and conventional meanings that permit verbal communication among individuals from the same community ...

Several discourse communities may exist ... The fact that a universe of discourse exists within a particular community of language users does not imply uniformity of opinion. (xi)

Given that such a discourse revolves around "shared values" or "reference points", Bjornson argues that:

As institutional structures become established ... a national discourse begins to take shape, and the people of one country come to share with each other a set of reference points unfamiliar to people of other countries. (p. xiii)

The concept of "shared references" raises the question of the extent of sharing because hearing about an event does not make one share in that event. Though Bjornson recognizes the existence of diverse discourse communities, his critical practice does not develop them. Anglophone Literature, being one such discourse community, is subsumed under a larger discourse as Bjornson "seek[s] to define ... a sense of Cameroon national consciousness ..." (xi). Bjornson's method is an inversion of M.M. Bakhtin's theory which stresses on heteroglossia, difference or the "other" text, or, still more technically, the alterity of discourse:

Stratification and heteroglossia widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing. Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward. (272)

¹ *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience.* Bloomington / Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991.

I will sketch out the relevance of this theory by means of three examples, followed by a conclusion on the state of Anglophone art. This brief outline is a summary of a much wider research project.

The first example consists of these verses from Bate Besong's *Beasts of No Nation*:

Agbada go
Trouble come. (19)

This is how Besong denotes political change in Cameroon from the *gandura*-garbed Ahidjo to the suit-wearing Biya - a change of the guard with well-known ramifications on the national welfare. Besong's saying above can mean different things to an Anglophone and a Francophone. The trouble that comes with the disappearance of the 'agbada' is appreciated in different terms in the English- and French- speaking areas of Cameroon. The Anglophone Question has amplified these differences appreciably to such an extent that the dialogic context should be taken into account in the interpretation of these verses.

In the same play, the author talks about "nightsoil men". Besong has the rare quality of using unsettling images which are, nevertheless, apt descriptions of the prevailing situation, hence the faeces and toilets of the stage set in *Beasts* to represent a degenerating Yaounde / Cameroon post-1982. In this dictatorship, though everybody might be a nightsoil man, that is, the downtrodden, there is a special one, the "Nightsoil-Anglo" as the question below implies:

<i>Narrator:</i>	Brute beasts that have No understanding. Now you grin like a frog And run about Ednouay. To me you are a nightsoil Warrior and to you You are a nightsoil Warrior but to a night- Soil Warrior - are you a Nightsoil-Anglo? (6)
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There is therefore a context to be unravelled for a full understanding of the character of a "Nightsoil Anglo".

As a third example, we may wish to compare the following two utterances:

Quand Yaounde respire, le Cameroun vit
(When Yaounde breathes, Cameroon is alive).

and

Soils of godly waters
City of saddles
nursing valleys

shouldering hills
and tethering homes
of our own naming,
All hail in countless fold!

Yaunde buttress the dreams of our soils.
("Yaunde" in Bongasu T. Kishani, *Konglanjo*, 1988, p. 63-64)

The statement is by President Paul Biya and the poem is by Kishani, an Anglophone from the North-West Province. Both utterances show the centrality of Yaounde in our national political life. Though referring to the same city, the statement is the bellicose rhetoric of a Francophone President, while the poem is a supplication reflecting on the subjugation experienced by other places and people within the Cameroon Republic. Therefore the concrete background for each of these utterances is needed for the listener to grasp its correct perspective.

Lake Nyos is another reference point. Cameroonians know about this national disaster but the interpretations differ. While Anglophone writers (Bate Besong, Bole Butake in *Lake God*, Roselyn Jua in "Mother Nyos") have used it as a metaphor of repression or to designate decimation, we are still to find the same responses in Francophone writers. The historical disaster at Lake Nyos in the North-West Province is now a potent symbol of the victimization to which the Anglophones are prone.

The above examples emphasize the fact that "language is shot through with intentions and accents" (Bakhtin, 293). Language is therefore to be viewed "not as a system of abstract grammatical categories but as ideologically saturated, a world-view."

The world-view of Anglophones forcefully denounces their marginalisation, which explains their forerunner role in the present search for an alternative system of government in Cameroon. Anglophone Literature is at the forefront of the present denunciation; it broached the subject of a pro-democracy movement in advance of Cameroonian politicians as borne out by some key plays. The literature has the special quality of predicting socio-political events such as the widespread agitation in the country throughout 1991: the play *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* advocated "People power", an idea firmly imprinted in the slogan of the Social Democratic Front party (SDF), "Power to the People". Bate Besong's *Requiem for The Last Kaiser* highlights the revolutionary stance of STUDENT and WOMAN, both catalysts for change on our political scene as we all know. At no time in our history has the spotlight been so bright on the activities of the students and women. STUDENT and WOMAN both discuss their incarcerated leader in this play who may stand for John Fru Ndi, groundlessly put under house arrest during the State of Emergency in 1992 - one year after the play was published. The controversial image of Fru Ndi as "le rebelle de Bamenda", according to *Le Patriote*, and as the People's hero can be one basis for appreciating the following dialogue from the same play:

Woman: Our suffering is our bridge to one another.

Voice of Abessollo: We'll see that you don't venture near that bridge ...

Woman: That bridge is our cross. And everyone of us - like him must cross that bridge, or die while he still lives ...

Voice of Abessollo: If you are thinking of that dissident mad crackpot in detention then, we'll see.

Woman: You may throw us into unnamable catacombs like you've done to him but Victory and the future are ours.

Voice of Abessollo: So you are Woman Samson?

Woman: I am Umkhonto we Sizwe. I am of Operation Dead Country! (18)

Long before Yaounde had its severe garbage problem, Bate Besong in *Beasts* reduced the capital of Cameroon to a "shit" bucket inhabited by "beasts" and "nightsoil men". These images constitute his view of Cameroon as a country in a state of advanced degeneracy instead of the officially declared "Advanced Democracy."

Why then do I talk of zero degree when such significant works have already been written? "Le degré zero" refers both to the state of the art and to the minority position of Anglophones within the Republic. The images discussed above are cumulative expressions of the state of victimization, a necessary aesthetic but one which leaves us still at the zero-end of our task to reconstruct and communicate our Anglophoneness to posterity. The chronotope of nearly all existing Anglophone protest works multiplies the symbols of victimization, but this cannot be the force of the Anglophone literary tradition. Anglophone Cameroon Literature has to move from deconstruction to (re)construction of a heritage that Anglophones are stringently clinging to in this pluralist era of Cameroon's democratisation.

Anglophone Writing and the Democratic Process

Simon Munzu

Writing, as I understand it, involves two basic activities. The writer either creates something new, in which case he engages in *literary composition*, or he examines, analyzes, comments upon and evaluates the creative writing of other people, in which case he applies himself to *literary criticism*.

Neither in respect of literary composition, nor with regard to literary criticism, can I lay claim to any remarkable ability. Indeed, as you all can see, the present panel was evidently constituted so as to exhibit my incompetence in the subject of writing. For, when it comes to literary composition and literary criticism in Cameroon today, who is Simon Munzu in the company of such established names as Nalova Lyonga, Bole Butake, Hansel Eyoh and Godfrey Tangwa?

Fortunately for me, however, there is a great deal more involved in writing than the writer's activity - composition or criticism. Writing takes place in a setting, a milieu, a context: in short, in an environment. A keen observer of the scene before him may be able to paint a picture of the writer's working environment notwithstanding that he does not himself have enough talent to write creatively. It is our right, as readers, to demand writing of good quality from those whom we acknowledge as writers. But it is also our duty, in so doing, not to lose sight of the environment in which the writer exercises his craft. May I, therefore, be permitted to brush on the canvas offered by this panel discussion a few broad strokes of the Anglophone Cameroonian writer's environment within the framework of the on-going democratic - perhaps we should say *democratisation* - process. I should like, given the time limit which the moderator has imposed on each speaker, to dwell on just two aspects of that environment.

When I look at the situation, I do not see much, if any, Anglophone writing that has been devoted to the study of the democratic process itself. What I perceive is the emergence and the growth of Anglophone Literature of varying quality, dealing with public issues, the conceptualization and externalization of which would have been unimaginable had it not been for the wind of change that for the past three years has been blowing across the African continent and which, in this country, has come to assume the force of a hurricane. With increasing intensity, over this period the consumer of Anglophone Cameroon writing has been served a varied diet of plays, essays and poems.

What has been the Anglophone writer's medium of expression? This raises the first environmental issue, that of the writer's vehicle of communication.

By far the most widely used medium has been the English-language newspapers and magazines, at least fifteen of which have sprung up in various regions of the country since 1990. The factors militating in favour of this vehicle of communication are many and varied. Under current practice, no expense is involved in placing an article in a newspaper in Cameroon. The writer does not pay to have his writing published. For his part, the editor or publisher does not pay anything for the contributions which he accepts for publication and which he actually publishes. The abundance of newspapers in search of material to publish means that plenty of space is available. This increases the probability that one's contribution would be accepted and that one would have the narcissistic satisfaction of seeing oneself in print in one's own lifetime. The newspaper article is well-adapted to short writing in which often the writer does not have more than one theme that he wishes to develop.

On the other hand, newspaper writing does present a number of serious disadvantages. It is essentially ephemeral in character. It tends to pass with the duration of the particular newspaper's or magazine's frequency of publication - daily, weekly or monthly. It is likely not to reach as wide an audience as seems desirable since its circulation depends on that of the newspaper itself. The quality of the newspaper that carries a contribution tends in the eyes and minds of the reading public to be attributed to the contribution without sufficient regard to the inherent qualities of the latter.

In the light of these attendant disadvantages, and while remaining thankful for the newspaper as a medium of literary expression, we must voice our concern at the rather limited and limiting nature of the vehicles of communication which are available to today's Anglophone Cameroon writer. In this connection, I find interesting, and do welcome, the proposal that has been put forward at this workshop on Anglophone Cameroon writing "to create a forum for literary studies of the highest quality as well as articles commissioned on educational, legal and social issues of import relevant to the times" (Nalova Lyonga).¹

The second aspect of the Anglophone Cameroon writer's environment that I should wish to raise briefly concerns the attitudes that are encountered in the writing milieu, all of which appear to spring from the prevailing climate within the democratic process. First, there is the attitude of the editors and publishers who publish the material which writers offer for publication. It is characterised by a lamentably high level of intolerance in which submissions tend to be considered for publication not on the basis of their

1 Reference to *WEKA: A Journal of Anglophone Cameroon Writing and the Arts* proposed in connection with the Workshop.

inherent merits but of the political affiliation of the author. Some would-be contributors are classified in advance as "baddies" and undeserving of publication, not on account of any shortcomings in the form or content of their writing, but because they are perceived to be on the "wrong" side of the political divide. In the event, the reading public is deprived of what might otherwise have been writing of the first quality. The editorial censorship thus applied by newspaper and magazine editors and publishers deserves to be condemned no less than that imposed and practised by administrative authorities. It proceeds from an attitude of hostility to controversy, which fails to recognize that controversy is the nursery of genius.

No less determinant of the quality and fortunes of Anglophone Cameroon writing in this era of democratisation is the attitude of writers themselves. Many of them are just as intolerant and loathful of controversy as certain editors and publishers. They see and portray society as in a consummate state of conflict in which the battle lines are sharply drawn between the governors and the governed, the oppressors and the oppressed, the have and the have-not. To them, all literature has to be "committed". It has to be a literature of protest, of indictment, of action. Especially of action, which requires that the writer descend into the arena of political combat amidst, and on the side of, the protesters, the marchers, the activists. These writers would have nothing to do with such of their colleagues as believe that the proper business of literature is not to be "committed" or to espouse a particular cause, but to study observed phenomena; and who, therefore, put a premium not on their own activism, but on elucidation, exposition and information with a view to facilitating the citizen's political choices based on a full knowledge of the relevant facts.

Finally, we may note the attitude of readers. In the present state of Anglophone Cameroon writing, its readers are, for the most part, passive and complacent in their appreciation of the literature which is offered to them. They tend to show impatience and lack of interest with writing that is thematically profound or that makes intellectual demands upon them. They are quick when they have the chance to meet the writer in person to shower him with half-meant accolades and to express mock admiration for his work in the hope, thereby, of giving, as T.S. Eliot once observed at another time in another place, "evidence of their own intelligence as well". They fail to realise that incisively adverse criticism which is honourably motivated is likely to generate creative replies capable of enhancing the overall quality of our literary output.

In the time at my disposal, I may not have succeeded in my contribution to this panel discussion to reveal more than a very small tip of the Anglophone Cameroon writer's evidently gigantic environmental iceberg. I hope, in so doing, however, to have drawn attention to the necessity for us to create a more supportive environment for Anglophone Cameroon writing within the framework of the ongoing democratic process.

The Other Side of Anglophone Writing

Godfrey B. Tangwa

My remarks this evening will be more on *the other side of Anglophone writing* than on Anglophone writing as such. What do I mean by "the other side"? The other side of Anglophone writing is Anglophone reading. Writing and reading are siamese twins, two sides of one and the same coin; the one is meaningless without the other and the other is impossible without the one.

The most fundamental assumption of democracy is equality, the equality of all human beings *qua* human beings. This basic assumption is exemplified in the procedural injunction: One Man, One Vote! Democracy also requires certain foundational pre-conditions: the rule of law, respect of human rights, mass literacy and freedom in its manifold forms, especially freedom of thought and expression, association or assembly. Of all these pre-conditions, literacy is arguably the single most important because, without literacy, the others are seriously handicapped, if not completely jeopardised.

My remarks on Anglophone reading will be random and sketchy and are, in fact, mainly a personal testimony.

Let me start with a passing comparative remark about one of our next-door neighbours: Nigeria. I spent a good chunk of my life in Nigeria studying and even working, and I am thus fairly familiar with the Nigerian situation. Globally, Nigerians have greatly developed the art of writing and reading, especially reading, in comparison to Cameroonians. In most parts of Nigeria, it is not the cock that wakes you from your sleep but the newspaper vendor. On Sundays especially, most Sunday papers completely sell out before sunrise. The works of most Nigerian authors are well known to most literate Nigerians, either directly or indirectly through newspaper reviews and commentaries. In all Nigerian universities, the notice boards and walls always serve not only for posting sundry notices and advertisements but for posting essays on hot or controversial issues which are avidly read and freely commented upon, on the spot, in writing. And this only in addition to several campus publications of regular periodicity. Even in Nigerian secondary schools, there are regular literary and 'bug' magazines. Even as a lecturer at the University of Ife, a day could scarcely pass without my going to the students' notice board to read essays and comments of all sorts.

Were it not for the Reunification in 1961, it is more than likely that the development of reading and writing in West Cameroon would have been very similar to that of Nigeria.

Already around 1960, about four newspapers were flourishing in Southern Cameroons and, with the emergence of columnists like Ako-Aya later, it was only a matter of time before the Cameroonian counterpart of the popular Onitsha Market Literature would develop. The only problem was that post-primary education was still too elitist in conception and practice. Apart from a few Teacher Training colleges, the only secondary educational institutions that existed in Southern Cameroons were Sasse, Bali, Okoyong and Ombe. Gaining admission into any of these was equivalent to passing through the biblical needle's eye. But by the early sixties, the overly elitist conception of secondary education was broken with the establishment of colleges like Saker Baptist in Victoria, St. Augustine's in Nso, St. Bede's in Ashing, Longla Commercial College in Bamenda. Some of these were mainly non-boarding schools. At St. Augustine's College, Nso, Fr. Jaap Nielen set the pace and tempo of the new times by admitting several students from poor backgrounds who had no intention of becoming religious ministers and who came to school from home and paid their fees in kind with corn, beans, potatoes, yams, goats, etc.

The Reunification in 1961, and particularly the Unitary Constitution of 1972, dealt a heavy blow to the development of reading and writing in West Cameroon. Government terrorism and wanton abuse of human rights, hitherto completely unknown in West Cameroon, became the order of the day. Criticizing the government in any way became a treasonable offence, and putting down such criticism in writing, or merely reading it, was even more serious.

The Reunification turned out to be a most traumatic experience for most West Cameroonians. I have somewhere documented the experience of the first encounter between the people of my village and East Cameroon *gendarmes* shortly after Reunification. It is a story I should not shy away from re-telling.

The *gendarmes* were passing through my village, Shisong, to a neighbouring village, Mbotong, on a mission to arrest some criminal named Jokwei. Jokwei was one of those traders who used to shuttle, *cum pedibus*, between Cameroon and Nigeria, going as far as Yola, Maiduguri and Onitsha. On his way back from one of such trips he was intercepted by *gendarmes* who discovered some guns and amunition in his baggage. They suspected him to be an arms supplier to the "maquisards" of East Cameroon. They beat, tortured and imprisoned him. But one day he jumped jail.

That is why they had come after him to his village. But on their way, they molested and harassed everybody they met. If they met you on their way, they insisted that you must be Jokwei: "Na you be Jokwei? Na you be Jokwei? No bi you be Jokwei? Show we Jokwei!" they would shout as blows and kicks rained on you. When they reached a small local market where mainly women and children were selling edibles, they not only looted

everything but destroyed all the vessels and containers. The people of my village had never imagined such completely unprovoked, wanton wickedness to be possible.

And the irony in this story is that while these fellows were wasting their time brutalising innocent people on their way, news of their arrival reached the person they were really after and he escaped.

Not long after this incident, I gained admission into Sasse College. My father took me down to Sasse through East Cameroon, which was now an easier way of travelling than the usual one through Mamfe. On the way, we saw several villages which had been completely razed down by soldiers. At some point we saw the heads of "maquisards" which had been cut and displayed by the roadside as a warning. We passed through numerous check-points and at each of them, they would close in on us menacingly with guns as if we were terrorists. But the driver of our vehicle, a landrover, was a fellow with some experience of East Cameroon and great practical intelligence. He had put some important-looking headmaster in the front and at every check-point he would shout: "Salute chief! Na new ministre this weh I di take to Foncha for Buea. Na him fumble for back so." And they would let us pass. At some check-point we saw them beat up some driver so mercilessly that he fell unconscious. He had refused to stop when they blew the whistle and they fired on his tyres to stop him. How relieved we all were when we finally crossed the last East Cameroon check-point somewhere around Loum and started heading for Kumba!

These early experiences gave me a distaste for everything French and Francophone that has lasted to the present and that was only slightly mitigated by the fact that my very first visit to France in 1982 was a very agreeable experience. I suspect that my psychological refusal to master the French language must be somehow connected with these same early experiences.

By the early eighties, the majority of West Cameroonians had thoroughly adapted themselves to the East Cameroon system. They had understood that the single most important qualification for recruitment, appointments, advancements and general personal progress and development was *loyalty to the regime*. Professional qualification and experience counted for little. Your own student or apprentice could be appointed your boss any time by a radio announcement during the lunch break. You could be appointed a Minister even if you were an outcast or slave in your home area. Even as a parliamentarian, you didn't need any constituency or home-base. Mr. John Tatah was quite honest and right when he stated some time ago that he was in parliament to represent the government.

Above all, West Cameroonians finally understood that reflective or critical thinking, reading and especially writing, were *suicidal* in all nuances of the term. Those who *dared* are living witnesses of the correctness of this assertion. Among the boldest of these

darers we can cite Albert Mukong, Bate Besong, Gorji Dinka, Charlie Ndi Chia. These people challenged the status quo directly, frontally, without any equivocations or even undue subtleties. I believe that all who cherish the heritage of Anglo-Saxon values in this country owe them an unpayable debt.

By the early eighties, the only areas within which Cameroonians were allowed unrestrained freedom, and within which they could operate without fear of being considered subversive, were eating, drinking, copulating and sports, especially football. I got something close to a severe cultural shock when I finally returned from my long sojourn in Nigeria in 1986. The inevitable effects of the wreck and rape of the economy by the ruling class were already quite visible in 1986. But it was as if Cameroonians were in a drunken stupor. Messages of congratulations, solidarity and support for the regime were read on radio almost daily, the most flattering usually coming from the North-West and South-West Provinces. Apart from calculated flattery, the only other options were either complete indifference or undue caution even among what could be called the 'radicals'. When the Bernard Fonlon Society was being launched in November 1987, the foundation members decided to hear beforehand all the papers that were to be read on the occasion - a type of self-censorship. In my own paper, the following sentence occurred: "In a situation where many so-called technocrats, holding high public offices, have proved to be nothing but kleptocrats, Bernard Fonlon has shown all of us that it is possible to hold high office without abuse and corruption, that it is possible to hold high office and remain human and humble." Nearly all the members were unanimous that I should take off the sentence. I crossed it out with the pen but still read it when the time came.

Bole Butake's play *Lake God* came out in 1986. By the time he had finished running the production of the play with the Yaounde University Theatre, I met a lecturer in the English Department, who not only was unaware of the performances but even of the fact that Butake had written any such play. Butake himself was still too cautious at the time. He was not yet a committed writer. In a review of *Lake God* I remarked that the play, which effectively takes refuge in anachronism and cosmogonic myths, could uncharitably be dismissed as "the trivialization of a human tragedy." Butake himself told me that while he was writing the play in the U.S.A., Ngugi wa Thiong'o had tried unsuccessfully to convince him to explore the thematic possibility of the suggestion that the Lake Nyos disaster was a surreptitious test of the Neutron Bomb.

About the same time, Siga Asanga introduced me to the works of Bate Besong. I was very impressed with *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*. I suggested to Butake that we should produce the play and he replied: "I am not looking for accommodation in Kondengui. If you want to go there, you can go alone."

The radicalisation of Bole Butake as an artist started with his *The Survivors* and culminated in the present time with *And Palm-Wine Will Flow* which, as I remarked in a comment on a draft of *The Survivors* Butake gave me to read, can take a seat of honour beside Bate Besong's *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, *Beasts of No Nation* and *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, as committed plays.

But from the point of view of Anglophone reading, the efficacy of plays and books in general remains very doubtful. If Butake's plays are relatively well known, it is mainly because they are required reading in his courses at the University where they are read more out of constraint than deliberate choice. During the launching in Yaounde of Bate Besong's *Obasinjom Warrior* and Nol Alembong's *The Passing Wind* last year, we saw several young ladies scrambling to be photographed with Mbella Sonne Dipoko. A friend of mine said that he didn't know that Mbella was so well known and popular. But I remarked that I could bet my monthly salary that none of those young ladies had ever read *Because of Women* or *A Few Nights and Days* and that what attracted them was rather Mbella's rastafarian dreadlocks and luxuriant beard. I still stand by that remark.

The situation is, admittedly, rapidly evolving. But we have not yet reached the stage where Cameroonians would voluntarily, if not compulsively, rush for reading material. We are, however, clearly headed there. And when we do reach there, it would be thanks to two main factors:

- (a) the emergence of the defiant democratic struggle into the open with the launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in Bamenda on 26th May, 1990;
- (b) the proliferation of privately owned, independent newspapers that followed that event.

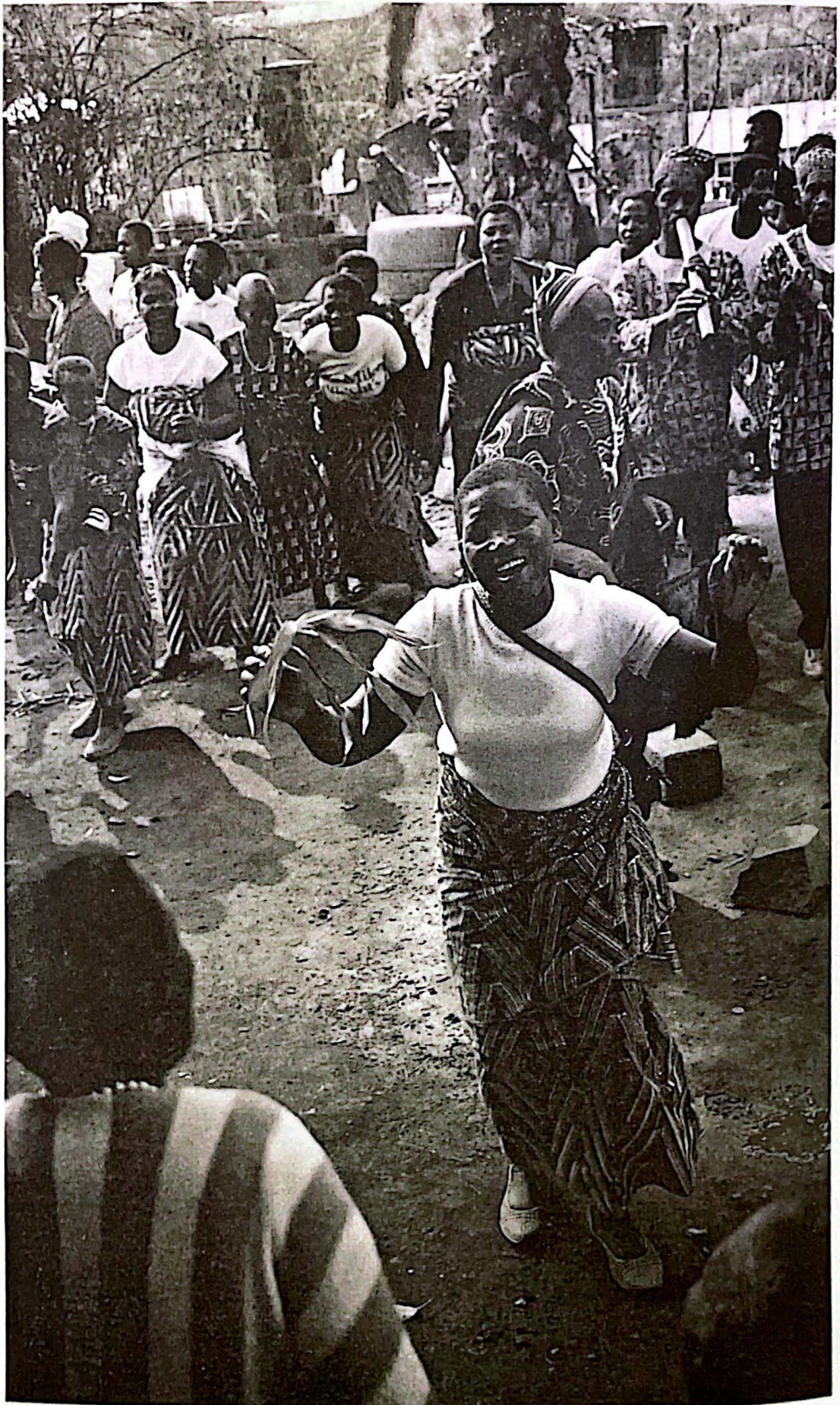
The reading appetite of Cameroonians has been greatly whetted in recent years by newspaper and magazine articles. The newspaper article has the advantages of addressing "hot" issues in a direct, brief and often lighthearted manner. It is thus much more economical and easier to read with minimal effort. In "I Refuse to be Lapiroed", Butake says, directly and clearly, in half a page, most of what he has been trying to say in a roundabout way, through metaphors and symbols, in his plays. "I Refuse to be Lapiroed" was read by thousands of people. One of my most pleasant surprises regarding the mutation in consciousness of Cameroonians was when I heard half-literates in a motor-park quoting passages from a column I started writing in one of the newspapers, under a pen name, with the definite aim of waking up Cameroonians from their lethargic slumber and general complacency. If things continue the way they are going now, there is no doubt that Cameroonians will soon discover the several books in English, which came out stillborn from the press, and which are presently gathering dust on the shelves of some bookshop, before the rats and termites completely eat them up.

When the history of the development of Anglophone Cameroon reading and writing comes to be written, a more than passing mention will surely be made of the newspapers, magazines and columnists of the turbulent early nineties. They are legion; but we can mention the following: *Cameroon Post*, *Le Messenger*, *Cameroon Life*, *Post Watch*, *Times and Life*, *The Herald*, *The Sketch*, *Weekly Post*, *Cameroon Today*; Francis Wache, Martin Jumbam, Ntemfac Ofegbe, George Ngwane, Sam Nuvala Fonkem, Charlie Ndi Chia, Tande Dibussi, Bate Besong, Rotcod Gobata, Jing Thomas Ayeah, Hilary Fokum, among several others.

VIII

**WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEMOCRATIC
CHANGE IN CAMEROON**

ROUND TABLE II



Women celebrating peace and change

Natural Democrats:
Women and the Leadership Crisis in Cameroon Literature

Nalova Lyonga

There is, or so it seems, something inherently and self evidently democratic about women at large, be it in the private or public sphere. In their daily lives, many of them look after their own families who constitute small communities. For the smooth running of these communities, the principles needed in larger democratic societies, especially justice and altruism, are required. Little wonder therefore that well informed and active women can easily step out of their kitchen role into the public arena in times of crisis. Cameroonians have recently witnessed such transposition with the Ta'kembeng during the State of Emergency in Bamenda in the North-West Province in October 1992. Before this women's group surfaced, Cameroon playwrights had dramatized women's role in resolving a crisis.

Tonight's discussion will be limited to Anglophone drama, which has dominated the literary scene from 1990 by its quality of vision rather than its volume. From Bole Butake and Bate Besong to Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh and Victor Epie'Ngome, we have a repertory of about ten plays, which are shaped in the avant-garde mould - new, bold, a step ahead of the political process in Cameroon. But time allows me to discuss only one representative play in some detail. I will discuss first the background as well as the structural development to reveal the new vision in such plays where women's influence is no longer curbed by warped, myopic and anachronistic views.

On 26th May, 1990, John Fru Ndi in Bamenda launched the first opposition party since Cameroon instituted the monoparty system in 1966. On the same day the students of the University of Yaounde on campus organized a mini-launching in the shadow of the big event in Bamenda. On this occasion the song, "Muyenge", the theme song for Eyoh's children's play of that title, was sung by the rallying students and mistaken for the Nigerian national anthem by the CRTV newsmen. This caused no small stir in the ranks of a jittery administration that characterized them as Anglophone, subversive and secessionist - notwithstanding that the desire for change was burning across Anglophone / Francophone divisions in the University and beyond.

In the morning of the same day, Butake and the University Theatre troupe were rehearsing for their third performance of his very popular play entitled *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*. Published and premiered in 1989, the play augured political activism before Yondo Black made his unsuccessful attempt to form an opposition party in Douala.

Butake's play strikes a pre-emptive blow at monolithism, the State's fundamental mark in cultural and, especially, political structures since El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo, with Kwengong's announcement that "No more shall we allow / One person to rule our land for us!" (54) No Cameroonian playwright has ever been so bold, none so foolhardy (as it seemed some time ago) as to put such revolutionary words in the mouth of any character, let alone a female one:

<i>Kwengong:</i>	He cannot be Fon. The women have decided. No more Fons in this land!
<i>Tapper:</i>	So, what is going to happen?
<i>Kwengong:</i>	The people will rule through the council of elders led by Shey here. The day that he takes the wrong decision, that same day, the people shall meet in the market place and put another at the head of the council of elders. (53)

But who are these women? What power do they wield to speak on behalf of the whole clan? It is, indeed, innovative that the woman's word should become representative of common consent, especially before a target audience that is not so progressive in matters concerning gender roles.

Not so long ago, Butake had experimented with innovative roles for the first time with Mboysi, a female character in *The Survivors* (1988), who shot dead the corrupt officer in charge of relief supplies for the five survivors of a gas disaster, one of whom she was. I had been present at all the performances of this play in the University and in town. It struck me that invariably the audience's reaction was the same to Mboysi's lone act of courage in killing the officer. During the scene there was an uneasy quiet in the audience when she got hold of Officer's gun, brought him on his knees and shot him dead.

<i>Mboysi:</i>	The elephant has fallen! The elephant has fallen! Woman is great! <i>(Suddenly there is a sharp whistle and the noise of many bootsteps).</i>
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<i>Voice: (Off-stage)</i>	Silence! <i>(Mboysi freezes, two shots are heard and she falls, clutching her breast. A short while later another man, revolver drawn, appears on stage. He turns Mboysi's body over with his booted feet and looks closely at her cold body).</i>
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<i>Officer:</i>	Walahi! She was a really beautiful woman. I now understand. But where did she get these crazy ideas from? And a woman of such beauty. Very strange, indeed. <i>(Turning to direction from where he just came).</i>
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Corporal! Bring your men and clear out the casualty (*Three other men come in. Two of them busy themselves with Mboysi's body over the watchful eye of a third. As they take the body out, Officer goes and sits at table and serves himself a tall whisky*). What a beautiful body to waste! Very strange! (*Blackout*) (38)

The audience's quiet did not imply horror as much as its failure to identify with the victor, least of all endorse her celebrative cry "Woman is great!" Therefore, when Mboysi was suddenly overpowered by the troop of soldiers, there was a roaring cheer from the audience. Because the dramatist's political message had been lost on them, they failed to be shocked by the multiple killings but instead were awakened to the macho appeal of the happenings. The playwright and his audience were thus at cross-purposes here, for the latter laughed at what seemingly the writer was out to correct - chauvinism and debasement - Butake showed himself to have out-paced his characteristically complacent compatriots; unlike them, he views in the dead heroine not "woman" but the People being crushed by a Gestapo-type Police of the regime. Butake had foreseen political clashes represented in this case by one woman's attempt to fight back. *The Survivors* was the first play to depict growing militarism explicitly as a means of governance, adopted by the Ahidjo Administration and the New Deal regime, the play's background. In fact, the control of the army in the play's context is so total as to suggest a military take over.

In a round-table discussion Nol Alembong protested vociferously against Mboysi's death, which he read as a wasted effort for both the character and her creator when Cameroon stands in need of revolutionary models. But I believe that Butake could more convincingly dramatize the political climate only by thus dispensing with easy solutions. This view is consonant with his own rationale, affirmed on several occasions, that, by killing the heroine, he wished to discourage individualistic action, a "strong breed" (Wole Soyinka) martyrdom, in favour of group action. The latter is his cherished theme as borne out by the groups Fibuen (*Lake God*) and Kwengong and company in his latest play.

So, two years later, the audience is more than ready for the playwright's choice of themes and characters. They endorse Kwengong's pronouncements above which brought the house down at the performance in Hilton Hotel in Yaounde. So popular were her ideas that the Anglophone and Francophone student viewers alike freely chorused her lines during the performance, giving it the aura of a traditional festival. Since the play was staged at the height of pro-democracy demonstrations which resulted in student arrests in the 1991/92 academic year in Yaounde, Kwengong was seen to be the students' alibi, as indeed she was for many a closeted rebel besides students. I watched and listened, each time incredulous, as the actress and the viewers together recited her lines. Kwengong was "stealing the language" (Ostriker) and public space, an attempt which

Mboysi had made unsuccessfully, or prematurely perhaps from the social standpoint. Whereas the latter's "Woman is great" was typically ignored, Kwengong's somewhat identical claim that "The only men left in the land are women. And they do not want any more Fons" (51) was applauded, surprisingly, with enthusiasm. Where Mboysi had been viewed threateningly as a "woman" usurping male sovereign space, Kwengong was, in her ultimate transformation, a liberator. She was woman=people=resistance to leviathan political repression; in this instance political oppression is therefore a levelling experience for men and women, by contrast the connotation in *The Survivors* provoked a genderised response in the audience. So, in *Palm-Wine*, Kwengong and the women's secret cult successfully kill the Fon in order to liberate the people. Kwengong, the Chief Priest and Tapper then have the opportunity to reinstate People Power, connoting a system of democracy where decisions will henceforth be taken in the market-place:

People of Ewawa!
 People of this land!
 As the sun rises at dawn
 So shall we all meet
 In the market place
 To decide on the destiny of this land.
 No more shall we allow
 One person to rule our land for us! (54)

The play's ideological position is mapped out by a fundamental opposition between spaces and numbers: market-place / palace; people / one-man. Essentially predictive, the play's impact became clearer in 1991 with the demise of one-party rule in Cameroon. Against this background, therefore, some parallels ought to be evoked.

One cannot minimize the ringing parallel between the artist's market-place as an enlarged forum for national debate and the politician's concept of a "national conference", the object of widespread unrest and strikes christened "Ghost Town" in Cameroon in 1991. The "Operation Ghost Town - Ghost Country" as it was otherwise known, had gripped the major cities in an economic stranglehold, except the capital, Yaounde (which President Biya affirmed "breathes", literally the air of smelling rot from its ubiquitous garbage heaps which nevertheless provide a fitting description of its moral state). Similarly, one cannot ignore the play's foreshadowing of "ghost town" fires in the Fon's palace which is burnt down as well as his supporters who are equally "consumed by ... fire" (53). The beserk Kibaranko, a masked agent of retributive justice, is the strongest symbolisation of unprecedented anger and rancour that would spill over to the streets a year later, shaking Cameroon's political foundations. As a watershed, this play will easily remain a classic not only of Anglophone but Cameroon drama.

At this point I should mention two renowned critics, Siga Asanga and Godfrey Tangwa, to illustrate further the qualities of this play. In my discussions with Asanga, he detested

Butake's method of "drugging" the women before they undertook any revolutionary action, referring to the ritual processes of the women's cults which I have already mentioned. One would have been contented with Asanga's criticism had the Ta'kembeng not proved Butake right before our own eyes. As Victor Turner has said of the ritual process, it enhances the group's immunity through an awareness of the mythical properties surrounding each member. As we all know, the Ta'kembeng thrive on this. On the same basis, ritual cements the groups in Butake's plays and ensures homogeneous action that the women are good at. "We must be one woman" (*Lake God*, 30), says Yensi at the beginning of their ritual. This is the tradition that the dramatist seeks to communicate.

In a related comment, Tangwa faults *Lake God*:

Butake's *Lake God* fails to take us beyond metaphysical (and largely erroneous) conceptions. Such extant conceptions are mostly mythical and mystical.

Lake God helps to further entrench and extend this mythification and mystification. In spite of its artistic merits, therefore, this play must be pronounced a work at the level of false consciousness. (Siga Asanga (ed.).

African Theatre Review 2 (1987) p. 144.)

Tangwa refers here to the beclouded gas explosion in Lake Nyos whose causes even the scientist's do not agree on. To add myth to this controversial national disaster which some considered a cover-up to international dealings is diversionary. Tangwa's observation therefore touches on the possible use of myth, mysticism, ritual and superstition as a means for escape rather than a rhetorical tool. However, in *Palm-Wine*, they deepen communication and effectively connect the viewers to their cultural background where the assumption that some people slide between the human and spiritual states is commonplace even on occasions like traditional dance festivals to which Kibaranko belongs. On stage the characters, Kwengong / Earth-Goddess and Tapper / Kibaranko, attain this duality by means of ritual, so that the audience witnesses Kwengong as a prophesying goddess and as the starry-eyed wife of Shey. She is viable in either of the two states of consciousness.

In conclusion, in Cameroon the Artist outlined the democratic struggle before it actually took place. He created characters whose parallels we have seen in reality during the "ghost town" and throughout the 1992 State of Emergency, thus pointing out women's role in the leadership crisis in Cameroon. Essentially predictive, this literature shows that the writer's vision is not necessarily outlandish and that his modes of characterization may intimate patterns of communication and participation in the People's struggle to implant democratic political structures in the Cameroon society.

Women's Role In Democratic Change In Cameroon

Roselyn Jua

It is a truism to state that women have been the shakers and movers behind every "true" or great revolution. Where would Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement be without a woman like Rosa Parks? Rosa Parks who was following in the footsteps of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth: women who began not only the fight to free the slaves in America but inculcated the doctrine of the right to freedom, in whatever sense, for all men and women, and so led to the fight for emancipation as well. Women have always set the precedent. They have been forerunners in every political movement of any consequence the world over.

That this claim holds true for the Cameroon woman and the Cameroon situation cannot be overstated. However, certain questions must be asked: where are these women in Cameroon as far as the political scenario is concerned? Some would even ask, where are your Rosa Parks, only to make the disclaimer that Cameroon is yet to have one. By way of a rebuttal, I can look back to history and say that even when the Civil Rights Movement and its leaders are being discussed, mention is never made of the contributions by women. They remain forever in the background, hazy characters who furtively appear and then disappear without any worthwhile mention. If this is true of women and the Civil Rights Movement, it is also true of the Cameroon woman who has boldly participated in the political life of the country from "Independence". She is yet to reap any rewards for any contribution she has so far made.

It is necessary to situate the context of the discussion because as soon as one begins to think of women and politics today in Cameroon, some very interesting and even sometimes ambiguous possibilities for questioning are raised. For one thing, there is no typical Cameroon woman. There are atheists, Christians, Moslems and the backgrounds are as varied and diverse as their traditions and cultures. Clearly, then, one must necessarily move away from generalisations. Even so, the Cameroon woman remains unique for, unlike women in European societies, she has been accorded relatively more freedom and "equality". But she remains in more ways than one the "silent" partner, not to be seen and certainly never to be heard. And she has for the most part acquiesced in the role allotted to her.

My first task in this paper is to prove that women have participated in the political life of Cameroon. For this purpose I will take a look at two traditional women's groups: the

Anlu in Kom¹ and Ta'kembeng in Bamenda (and it is not by design that these two groups all spring from the North-West Province).

Set up initially by the women as a practice through which redress for crimes against womanhood could be obtained, the Anlu became a political tool in 1958, influenced the outcome of the 1959 elections in Kom in favour of the KNDP and also changed the whole course of history as far as Southern Cameroons was concerned. How were they able to do so?

In a nutshell, the crisis was brought on by several factors. Kom women were used to farming vertically on the hill-slopes but the government had just voted that, in order to contain erosion, beds should be farmed horizontally across the slope. The women could not understand this and interpreted it solely as a way of interfering and changing their way of life. Rumours were also being fanned at the time that Kom-land was to be sold to the then Premier, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley of the KNC, and to the Igbos. The women's crops were also being destroyed by cattle owned by the Fulani. A government incapacitated by its means and unable to control the movement of cattle, could offer no help and find no favour with the women. The women were, therefore, against the KNC government and all it represented.

The leaders of the KNDP had apparently participated in voting the measures being enforced. But now they saw the reaction of the women and simply dissociated themselves from these laws. It was political strategy and it was to serve them well. For, now the women literally took up arms against the KNC whose members were pursued in the villages. The women demanded that KNC teachers be removed from their jobs. On July 8, 1958, classes were effectively disrupted. When on July 11, 1958, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley travelled to Njinikom, he came across several roadblocks and met only with a few supporters. (The Anlu performed mock-burials of KNC leaders and to this day it is believed that the KNC leader Mr. Ndong who died at the end of that year was killed by the Anlu.)

The women had effectively taken over power in the land. The traditional ruler, the Fon, and the Administrator, the Divisional Officer (D.O.), had been rendered powerless. This was power being restructured. The Anlu was to reign uninterrupted for three years in Kom history. Its leaders refused to be arrested but voluntarily surrendered themselves and agreed to go to Bamenda. They were followed in support by a large group of women, all trekking. Unable to understand these women, the government was forced to release them and supply them with food and transportation to take them back to Kom. The women had won, they had become a force to be reckoned with and they could now

1 For a more detailed account describing the origins and functions of the Anlu within the Kom kingdom and the Grassfields in general, see Paul N. Nkwi's "Traditional Female Militancy in a Modern Context", in Jean-Claude Barbier (ed.). *Femmes du Cameroun*. Paris: ORSTOM Karthala, 1985.

determine who won and lost in the 1959 elections: Kom had been a KNC stronghold but this was to change, for it was the KNDP that became victorious. Political issues of the day were clearly being decided by women.

The Ta'kembeng came into prominence in 1991 during the "villes mortes" period in Cameroon history. In traditional society women were, and are, excluded from the ruling group (Kwifon) which is strictly all male. There was a need for them to come together and form their own secret cult. And so was born the Ta'kembeng which is further restricted only to women who have at least attained the age of about sixty. During the "villes mortes" period, this group of old women now became the protectors of the land (just like the Anlu women). They put on their "kabbas" which they simply lifted up to show their nakedness thereby scaring off and repelling the attacks of the gendarmes sent out to contain the masses. The group was to become even more militant during the State of Emergency declared in Bamenda from October 27, 1992. They became the guardians of the Chairman of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Ni John Fru Ndi. (It is said that during the early days of the SDF, John Fru Ndi and his party quickly won the sympathy of these groups by distributing soap, sugar and oil to them. Clearly, some parallels can be drawn here between the Anlu-KNDP relationship and the Ta'kembeng-SDF relationship). This group of women effectively fooled the military guarding the entrance to John Fru Ndi's house by constructing or opening up another gap and passage through his wall and a neighbour's. In this way, they came and went without the military's knowledge. When the State of Emergency was lifted at the end of two months, there was still fear that the SDF Chairman would be arrested. On December 29, 1992 the CRTV showed pictures of the women mounting guard and literally taking over the functions of the departing gendarmes. They determined whether or not anyone could enter John Fru Ndi's compound.

As far as the actions of the Anlu and Ta'kembeng women are concerned, it is important to point out that most of the women participating are illiterate and "ignorant", and that they have sometimes not even understood the implications of their actions and the battle they are engaged in. Nevertheless, unlike their literate sisters, they have withstood the attack and won the battle, then dropped the reins for the men to hold so that the glory of the victory may be theirs.

The Cameroon woman is very much aware of the "supportive" role allotted to her. During the Ahidjo regime, and subsequently in the Biya regime, the "motions de soutiens" have always come first from women's groups. But if the woman has supported, even sometimes encouraged, her man (it is believed that some women during the Ahidjo regime offered themselves to high powered Ministers in order to ensure their husbands' (re)appointment), the man has thought that she was negligible and not a force to be reckoned with.

Women represent officially fifty-one percent of the Cameroon population. If the right figures could be obtained, this figure would be closer to sixty percent. Yet, this visible and silent "minority" is not even represented in the government. In a Cabinet which has doubled and is now made up of fifty Ministers, there is a Minister for Women's Affairs and a Secretary of State for Education: 48 men and only 2 women, and take another look at their portfolios! This same government is yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on Women's Rights. Obviously, women and the consideration they receive are only "seemingly equal."

For too long the Cameroon woman has been left in the cold and now is the time for her to come inside, take a stand and be counted. Men will argue that in traditional society, the woman has always had a place and a role to play. That place, that role, has been determined by the man in order to keep the woman out of the corridors of power so that at all times he may have her under his thumb and behind his bed. The decisions have been his and all she has been doing is executing his wishes. This is a society that is looking forward into the modern technological era but that is ironically implanted in certain traditional and / or cultural values as far as gender and role allocation are concerned. Women should not forget that they, too, have economic power. They are the "bayam sell-am" of this nation. They are the mothers and nurturers of families and it is all these families put together that constitute what is known as Cameroon. Therefore, the women are the force behind the nation. They should not look back to tradition. Why should men look forward and women look backwards? Looking back to culture, to tradition, is a tendency to nostalgia which inhibits rather than encourages growth. And women must grow, they must progress and get into the corridors of power and take up decisionmaking positions. They must become engaged politically so that they will no longer be left out in the cold.

A woman must say, like Zora Neale Hurston, "We are [no longer] the mules of this world" because women have a sense of direction, with objectives. Women are no longer mute carriers. We will blaze our own trails, damn the consequences but, above all, we must assert our womanhood in the political arena as well as the home.

Women's Contribution to Democratic Change in Cameroon

Bertha Sume Epie-Eyoh*

When one looks at the contribution of women to the process of democratic change in Cameroon, this might seem negligible, especially because women have not been in the forefront of this process. For instance only one woman so far heads a political party in the country; there is no woman editor-in-chief of a newspaper, be this public or private; there is no woman at the head of any human rights group. In fact it cannot be said that there are any visible women at the head of any public organisation involved in politics. This is one of the direct consequences of the past discriminations to which women have been subjected.

Nevertheless, after a closer look at the democratic process in Cameroon, one realises that the contribution of women has been enormous. They have always been the backbone of every political rally or political march in support of democracy or in demonstrations against repression. One cannot underestimate, for instance, the role that has been played by the Ta'kembeng women in the North-West Province during the period of the recently declared State of Emergency. There is also the emergence of several female organisations which although, *a priori*, may not be said to be political movements, have contributed in sensitizing the population of the need for a just and equitable society, both of which form the basis of a democratic society.

Two of such associations are The Cameroon Association of Female Jurists (CAFEJ) and The Association to Fight Against Cruelty to Women.

Some of the objectives of CAFEJ are:

- to help in the creation of laws governing the welfare of women;
- to fight discrimination against women;
- to disseminate information concerning the legal, social, economic and cultural status of women.

The second association has done a lot recently to sensitize the population on the violence perpetrated against women, in homes and out of them. It worked hand in hand with CAFEJ to draw the attention of the authorities responsible for ensuring public security to the rise of criminality and violence against women. Both organisations met with the Delegate for National Security, the Secretary of State in charge of the *Gendarmerie* and

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the Minister of Territorial Administration. Members of both organisations will like to believe that the action that followed shortly after these meetings was the fruit of their sensitization effort.

CAFEJ was consulted and made draft proposals on the electoral law and the media code. Even if all the proposals were not incorporated, the women members of this association, will like to believe that they had in one way or the other helped in bringing about some of the reforms. The Association has also made proposals on sections of the Cameroonian Civil Code that discriminate against women. CAFEJ was represented at the Tripartite Conference held in November 1991 to try to sort out the directions which democratisation had to take in Cameroon.

CAFEJ now operates two legal clinics in Yaounde and Douala and there are plans to open more in other towns of the country. The purpose of these clinics is to give free legal advice to all, but more particularly, to women.

Members of CAFEJ are convinced that legal literacy is fundamental to the democratic process. Legally literate citizens can then help to improve on the existing laws which will help to advance the process of democratization. Legal literacy enables women in particular to appreciate the usefulness of the law and instills in them the notion that this can help them solve their immediate problems. They must therefore know the law to derive any benefit from this project.

By appreciating the full benefits of exercising their rights (which are many) they will have the urge to elect people who can represent and defend their interests. This aspect is very important in the process of democratic change, especially in our country, because people will begin to look more at the issues affecting their daily lives and choose representatives accordingly, instead of looking at political representation from the myopic point of view of tribal or regional interests.

Legally speaking, all Cameroonians are equal. One need only refer to the constitution and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which has been ratified by Cameroon. However, we all know that in practice it is not the case. One can cite two key areas, namely, female representation in Government and in Parliament. Ironically, female representation in both has reduced even more with the advent of multipartism, the consequence of democratization. When Cameroon was a one-party state, a conscious effort was made to ensure female representation in government and parliament even though women often ended up as assistants to men or with rather "feminist" portfolios. The advent of multipartism has eroded much of this representation and very few of the existing political parties have presented women candidates in the recent elections. This issue was raised at the Tripartite Conference in Yaounde in November 1991 where it was suggested that political parties ascertain that they had female representatives as well as representatives of other minorities, particularly at the legislative and municipal elections.

Unfortunately, however, it is evident from the results of the last legislative elections that these parties did not follow the guidelines regarding female and minority representation. One may ask why such inequities should exist. Is it because women are less intelligent than their male counterparts? Certainly not. It is simply the result of certain traditions and customs which have become entrenched in our society and which discriminate against women. It has become a matter of urgent necessity, in fact, an imperative to redress this situation. It is not until recently that the authorization of one's spouse was no longer necessary for a wife to obtain a visa to travel abroad. No one ever thought it necessary that the husband should request the wife's authorization. Women were accorded a status similar to children.

For women to be able to contribute fully to the on-going democratic process, they have to enjoy their full rights as citizens, and not be relegated to secondary positions. Equality between men and women should be removed from the realm of slogans to one of reality. To obtain this, there must be short, medium and long term measures to be adopted. Permanent measures such as formal education, legal literacy, changing attitudes and customs must be introduced, alongside affirmative action.

Decisions should be taken by government to give women advantage over men. Women must be appointed to decision-making and executive positions. Political parties and other organisations should elect women to posts of responsibility rather than relegate them to the rank of hand-clappers and praise-singers. Women should be granted more access to formal education, health and child-care facilities. The purpose of all this will be to accelerate the achievement of equality. One may also add that women themselves must become more assertive and refuse to be perpetually relegated to secondary roles. They must become more competitive and enter into those professional areas which have been traditionally reserved for men.

In 1985 women of the world took a most important step in redefining their place within their societies. The resolutions were dubbed "The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies", which emphasized the fact that women were still inadequately represented in national and international political processes and suggested that efforts be intensified to overcome prejudices, stereotyped thinking, obstacles to women joining the diplomatic service and denial of career prospects, while the role of women in national liberation struggles should be expanded to allow for their equal participation in the nation building process afterwards.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women has advocated ways and means to arrive at desired equality. The Convention which was adopted on December 18, 1979 entered into force in 1981 and has been ratified by many countries. It recommends to governments to ensure that women have the opportunity to hold public office, to participate in the formulation and implementation of government

policy and to represent their governments at the international level. Unfortunately, Cameroon is yet to ratify this internationally-binding legal instrument which sets universal standards for the treatment of women in all areas of life and strives to guarantee them the rights to life without discrimination, to self development and to full participation in every aspect of society, including politics.

If such a policy were adopted in Cameroon, it will be one positive step in enabling women to contribute more to the process of democratic change which is currently going on. As has been recommended in international circles, more effort should be directed at setting targets or establishing quotas for female representation so as to ensure equal gender representation in all political bodies and to recruit females specifically into parties and unions. With growing participation of women, we can expect that more positive action in favour of women can be induced, but this will have to start with women themselves changing their own attitudes. They should learn to protest. While the government is being called upon to take legal measures to protect female participation in all spheres of national life, including political participation, gender issues should be brought into the limelight. Women whose qualifications and competence are equal to those of their male counterparts should be given equal opportunities to accede to public office, especially in decision-making and managerial positions. Government should take action which can bring women at par with men. In a country like ours where the official statistics, prepared mostly by men, put the female population ahead of the male, the inequalities of the status-quo are only too blatant and therefore intolerable. The Government has, of course, taken timid action to correct some of these inequalities, but more needs to be done. We need now more than ever before to move away from sloganeering to action ... positive and affirmative action in favour of women to ensure their full participation in the process of democratic change.

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Resolutions Adopted by Participants at the Workshop on Anglophone Cameroon Writing

1. Participants acknowledged the fact that there is a substantial corpus of Anglophone Cameroon Writing that deserves critical attention. The participants recommended follow-up activities.
2. Considering the conceptual imprecision of the terms "Writing" and "Literature", the participants adopted the following working definition of Anglophone Cameroon Writing: writing in any field of learning by a person of West Cameroon origin, or someone who has shared in the Anglophone Cameroon experience, expressed in English or in a local language.
3. It was recommended that writers pay more attention to the quality of the content and form of their works, while publishers also improve the finishing of their product. Criticism being central to improvement, it was resolved that literary criticism should be encouraged, sought and accepted by all interested in Anglophone Cameroon Writing.
4. Furthermore, it was resolved that as much as possible the contract between the author and the publisher should take cognizance of the difficulties faced by both. In the light of this, writers and publishers should be encouraged to jointly finance the publication and the publisher, by the same token, should ensure effective distribution of the work.
5. In view of encouraging joint ventures in the writing and publishing sectors, participants urged Anglophone Cameroon writers and publishers to set up a Publishing Co-operative Society.
6. Anglophone Cameroon writers should direct some of their effort towards meeting Anglophone school needs in textbooks, in all subject areas, especially at the secondary school level where foreign authors continue to be dominant. The Ministry of National Education should revise its attitude towards Anglophone Cameroon writing by including works by Anglophone Cameroonians in the school curricula. These works should particularly feature in the syllabuses of the G.C.E. Ordinary and Advanced levels.
7. The government and its specialized departments and institutions such as the Ministry of Culture should show more interest in, and allocate adequate resources towards, the promotion of Anglophone Cameroon writing which they have hitherto neglected.
8. The participants recommended that SOCINADA inform writers about registration procedures.

9. Finally, out of the Workshop, WEKA: A Journal of Anglophone Cameroon Writing and the Arts was created.

Done at Yaounde, 20th of January 1993.

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